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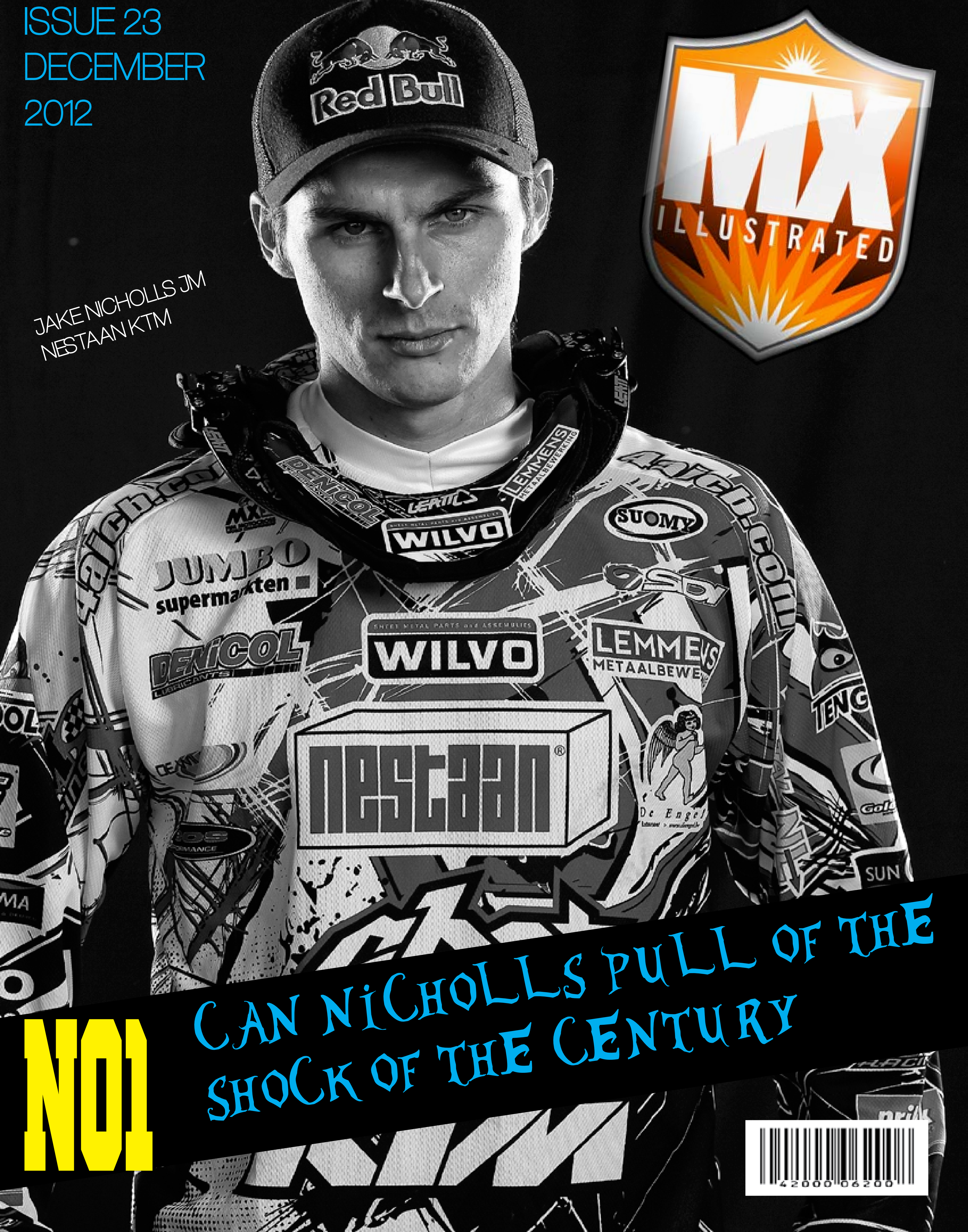
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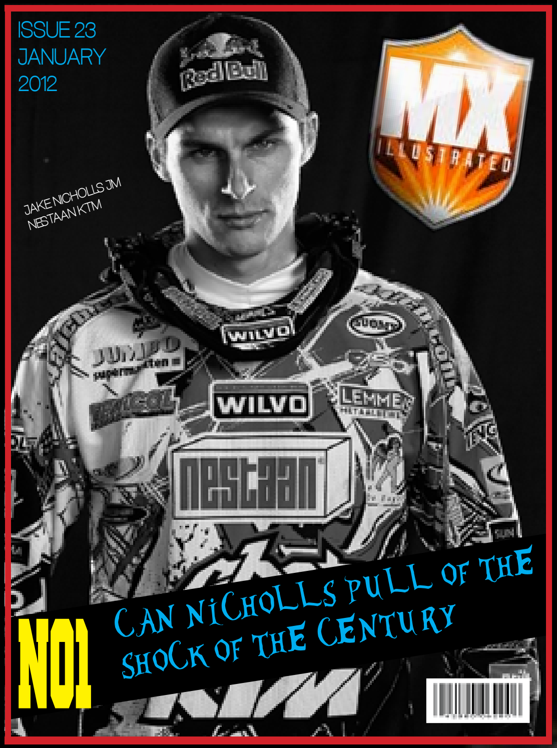
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JANUARY
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Jake Nicholls on the cover and Tommy Searle on the contents page. Ray Archer images

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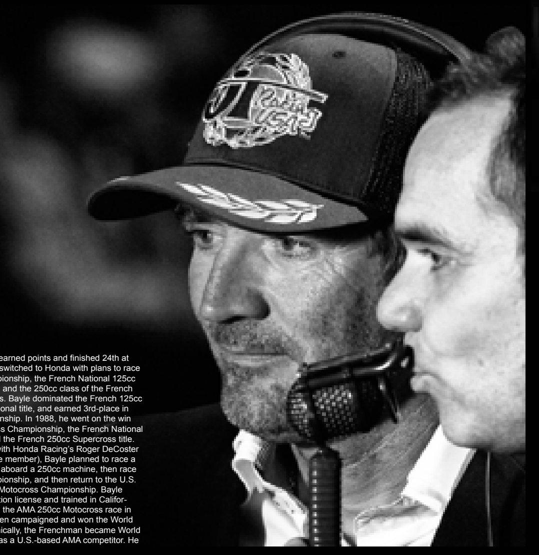
Since the 1960's the sport has change dramatically. Circuits that used to be narrow trails are now prepped to perfection. Motocross bikes have improved to the point that it is sometimes hard to tell a TM from a Yamaha, and the three class formula is long gone. Once there was 500cc, 250cc and 125cc, however now it's MX1, MX2 and to a lesser extent the back-up class MX3.

Of course the European Championships have improved out of this World and the whole FIM World Motocross Championship is about professional and unique riders. Gone are the days of sub-par riders trying to qualify, now it's just about full factory or return to your National Championship series.

In 2014 that aspect of full factory will more than likely be the case. The sport is growing at an alarming rate and teams like Red Bull KTM Factory, Rockstar Suzuki, Monster Energy Yamaha, Honda World Racing, the Monster Energy Kawasaki and TM Factory will be the majority on the start grid for a GP.

80 riders, two classes and a Super-final in 2014 seem a likely change and one that will attract more fans and only the elite Motocross racer. Add the night racing in Qatar, exotic places like Brazil, Mexico, Thailand, possibley Australia, America, New Zealand and South Africa and you see a totally different FIM World Motocross Championship than we have ever seen.



J.M.BAYLE A MOTOCROSS LEGEND

IN A WORLD OF KINGS THIS FRENCHMAN WAS THE BEST OF THEM ALL

STORY BY AMA IMAGES BY RAY ARCHER

Jean Michel Bayle is a multi-time AMA and World Motocross Champion who later turned to road racing, where he also enjoyed success on the world stage. Over the course of his career he raced with a variety of manufacturers, including Kawasaki, Honda, Aprilia, Team Roberts KR3, and Yamaha. He has also piloted cars in off-road rally and touring car races.

Born April 1, 1969 in Manosque, France, Jean Michele Bayle began riding motorcycles at age 6. He raced throughout the early 1980s as an amateur, and at age 13 won the 1982 Provence Championship. In 1985 at age 16 he entered the 250cc class at the Paris Bercy Supercross, racing aboard a Kawasaki. While his Bercy results were not impressive, this was his first taste of racing against an international field of competitors, including many AMA Supercross stars of the time.

In 1986 Bayle finished 4th in the French National 125cc Motocross Championship. He also raced in the 125cc World Championship, where he earned points and finished 24th at season's end. In 1987 he switched to Honda with plans to race in the World 125cc Championship, the French National 125cc Motocross Championship, and the 250cc class of the French National Supercross series. Bayle dominated the French 125cc class, winning his first national title, and earned 3rd-place in the World 125cc Championship. In 1988, he went on the win the World 125cc Motocross Championship, the French National 125cc Motocross title, and the French 250cc Supercross title.

In 1989, after consulting with Honda Racing's Roger DeCoster (also an AMA Hall of Fame member), Bayle planned to race a limited season in the U.S. aboard a 250cc machine, then race in the World 250cc Championship, and then return to the U.S. to race in the AMA 500cc Motocross Championship. Bayle acquired an AMA competition license and trained in California, then entered and won the AMA 250cc Motocross race in Gainesville, Florida. He then campaigned and won the World 250cc Championship. Ironically, the Frenchman became World Champion while licensed as a U.S.-based AMA competitor. He

Joel Roelants

Belgian Joel Roelants has a big 2013 ahead. Having worked hard in 2012 injury cost him a better result, but the new Yamaha factory rider has the mental attitude and good work ethic to come good. Ray Archer image

Andrea Malherbe

Another Belgian, but this time it is Andrea Malherbe. The former World 500cc Champion is seen here on his Zundapp during his European 125cc Championship success. Back in the day before the 125cc class was World class Malherbe actually won two title, which of course in modern day would have been counted as World 125cc titles.

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CHRISTOPHE POURCEL

The Frenchman will be missed in 2013. How a rider of his talent can be left on the shelf is a mystery. Sometimes talent is enough to be poplular in the AMA and FIM Championships. Ray Archer image

The Antonio Cairoli weapon

Antonio Cairoli has been the best Motocross rider in Europe for many years now and with the help from the Red Bull KTM Factory team that domination might last a few years yet. Just take a look at that orange machine. A thing of beauty. Ray Archer image

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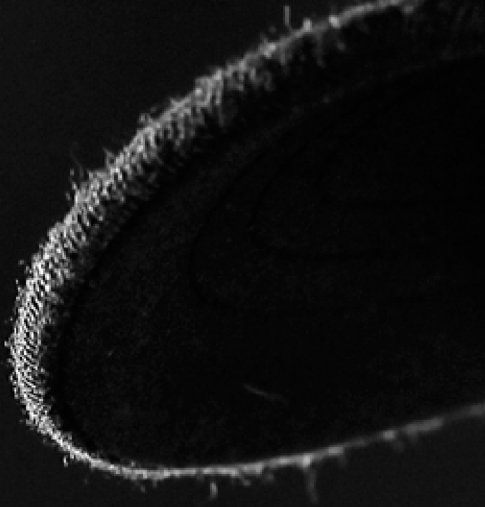
JAKE NICHOLLS

CAN HE BE THE NEXT WORLD CHAMPION FROM GREAT BRITAIN



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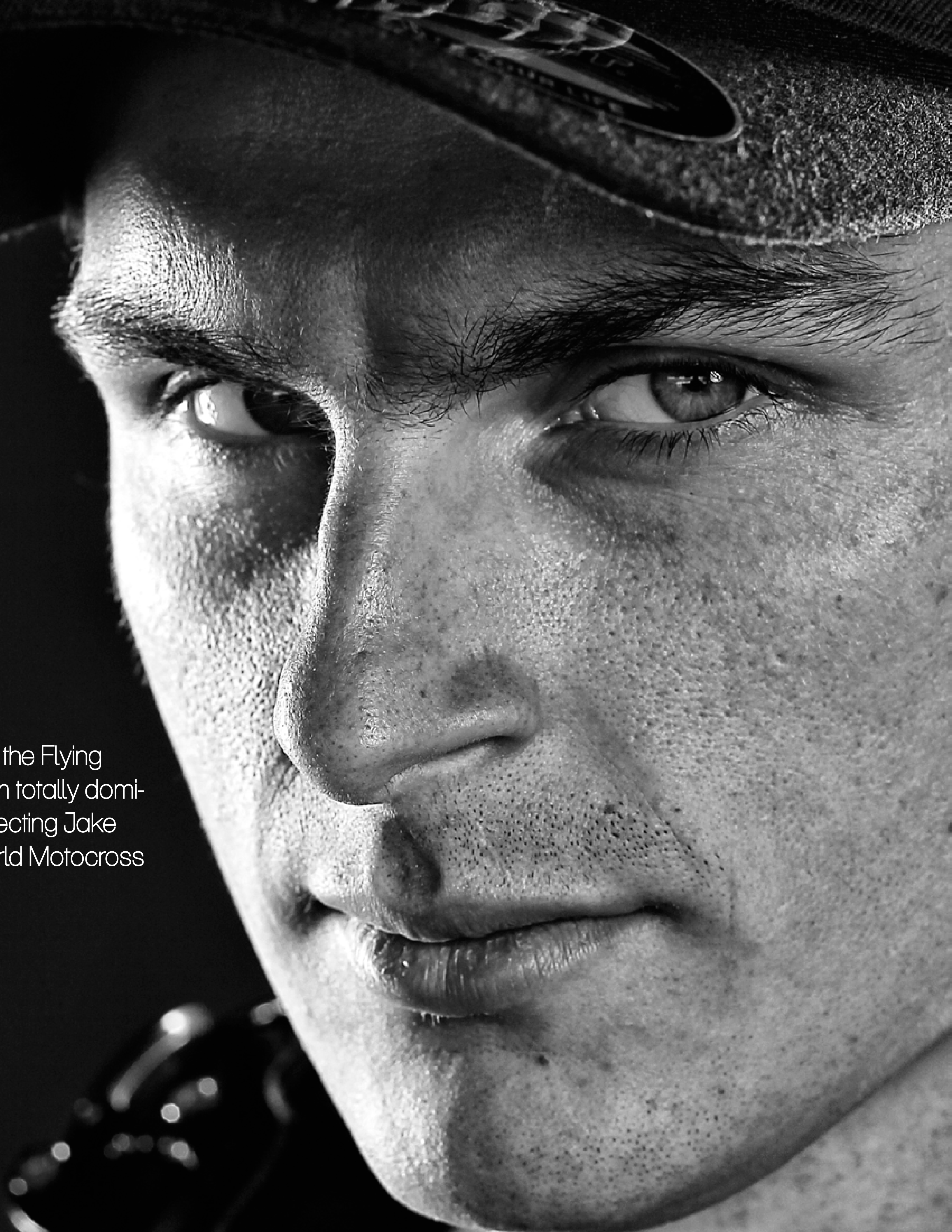

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Jake Nicholls could just be the dark horse of the 2013 FIM World Motocross Championships. The diehard Englishman has slowly build his career in a similar manner to good friend Josh Coppins, just chipping away at the riders in front of him in standings and one by one putting them in his done basket.

In 2012 he finished fourth in the World, already a brilliant achievement for somebody who doesn’t really have the talent of a Jeffrey Herlings, Ken Roczen or Marvin Musquin, but a rider who believes in himself more than most in the paddock.

With 2012 just about done and dusted Nicholls will head to New Zealand and go through an intense training regiment with good friend Ben Townley. Both are looking for a special reward in 2013 and together they will prepare for what lies ahead.

Nicholls has really been one of the stand outs in the FIM World MX2 Championship and many see him as the guy to give Jeffrey Herlings the most trouble in 2013. While Nicholls finished fourth in the 2012 MX2 Championship he will go into 2013 with one eye on the World Championship.

We decided to call Jake and ask him about the possibility of racing against the MX1 riders in the opening two rounds of the FIM World Motocross Championship, set for Doha, Qatar on March 2.

Motocross Illustrated: Jake, what do you think of the new rule of MX1 and MX2 racing together?

Nicholls: It was a shock when I heard it, but I think it is a good idea to try and also a good idea to get everyone excited about the first couple of rounds. There are obviously not going to be a full line-up and I can’t imagine the old boys over in Qatar are not going to be very fast, so it makes the rounds really great.

Motocross Illustrated: How about for you personally. Are you looking forward to the challenge?

Nicholls: Me personally I am not that excited about racing the 450’s, you can have a top five place in the class, but be in 25th place and it is hard work coming through against the 250s so it will be extra hard. It is a good idea for the crowd and everything else and for now it's more about television than the rider and that is understandable really, because it is a business at the end of theday.

Motocross Illustrated: It is going to be tough, but for the public it is going to make for some really exciting racing.

Nicholls: I think most riders would say the same, it isn't the nicest thing that they could introduce, but I fully am aware that we make our money through television and if that helps then we will all be happy at the end of the day; I am seeing the bigger picture. I am not that pumped about 2014 having that at every round that is for sure. I few rounds where we don't have a full line-up, but the prospect of having at every round doesn't excite me, although in 2014 I will be on the 450 in MX1, but the last thing you want is some little 16 year old on 250 coming in under you on a jump when you are on a 450.

Motocross Illustrated: You have ridden against the bigger bikes in MXoN and also International events, how did you find that?

Nicholls: I have done some Internationals where they do it and if it goes well it is brilliant and if it goes bad it is awful, because of the mixed race. It is a bitter sweet thing really. It could go the wrong way or the right way in a Grand Prix with the top 20 from each class. I rode Hawkstone Park for the International for a long time, and Joel Smets took me out once in my first ever Hawkstone Park International.

Motocross Illustrated: Obviously the 250s and 450s run totally different parts of the circuits, so there will be some wild moments I guess. Same sort of intensity as the MXoN on some occasions.

Nicholls: As you mentioned the 250s and the 450s run different lines and obviously the 250s need to go further outside to get the speed for a jump and the 450s can fly down the inside and come to a standstill and then we (the 250's) might have to roll the jump, so that is going to be the crappy thing. The 250's can't get away with as much.

Motocross Illustrated: But you like a good fight or not?

Nicholls: At the end of the day it is a race, and I am real racer, so I think that will play right into what I like. I am a gritty racer and never give up and I am pretty fit, so I am positive about it and I think whatever happens I can get myself out of trouble pretty well. I am not too worries about getting pushed around by a 450, because I think I can give as good as I get sort of thing. On that side of things I don't think it will hurt me at all, you said yourself it is going to be an extra hard race and we are going to have to work extra hard, and I think in those early races in Qatar and Thailand it might also be a little warmer than in Europe, so obviously I need to chase Ben Townley around a little more when I am training there in January.

Motocross Illustrated: What about the night race in Qatar, you looking forward to that?

Nicholls: I think the night race will be interesting and is something I am looking forward, but also not. The track won't be too rough, because otherwise there will be too many shadows, when they did the race in Thunder valley in America they had to flatten the whole track because the shadows made it difficult. The whole spectacle of racing at night should be pretty fun and it is nice to have something different and not running around in the mud in Europe at that time of the year.

Motocross Illustrated: British riders have really come on strong in the last couple of years and the MX2 class has seen a lot of good British riders in the mix. Do you enjoy that, does it help your results to try and be the best Brit?

Nicholls: At the start of the year it doesn't matter, as a racer I am pretty selfish and I couldn't give a rats about anyone, but when it comes to the end of the year and you look back it is pretty brilliant and at the Grand Prix of Germany and Elliot (Banks Browne), Tommy (Searle) and myself were in the top five, that was pretty brilliant, I mean we all grew up racing and that was nice to have all three of us inside the top five. At the same time when I am there I don't want anyone near me, I want to be top dog, when I think about it now I couldn't care less, but at the same time it is brilliant when you look back and there are four or five inside the top ten and it is brilliant and we have all done well when you consider the lack of help we get from our federation.

Motocross Illustrated: Fourth in the World in 2012, two of the three guys ahead of you moved up to MX1 and only Herlings left. Maybe Tonus will be up there also, but you have a great shot at second in the World in 2013. You can finish pretty

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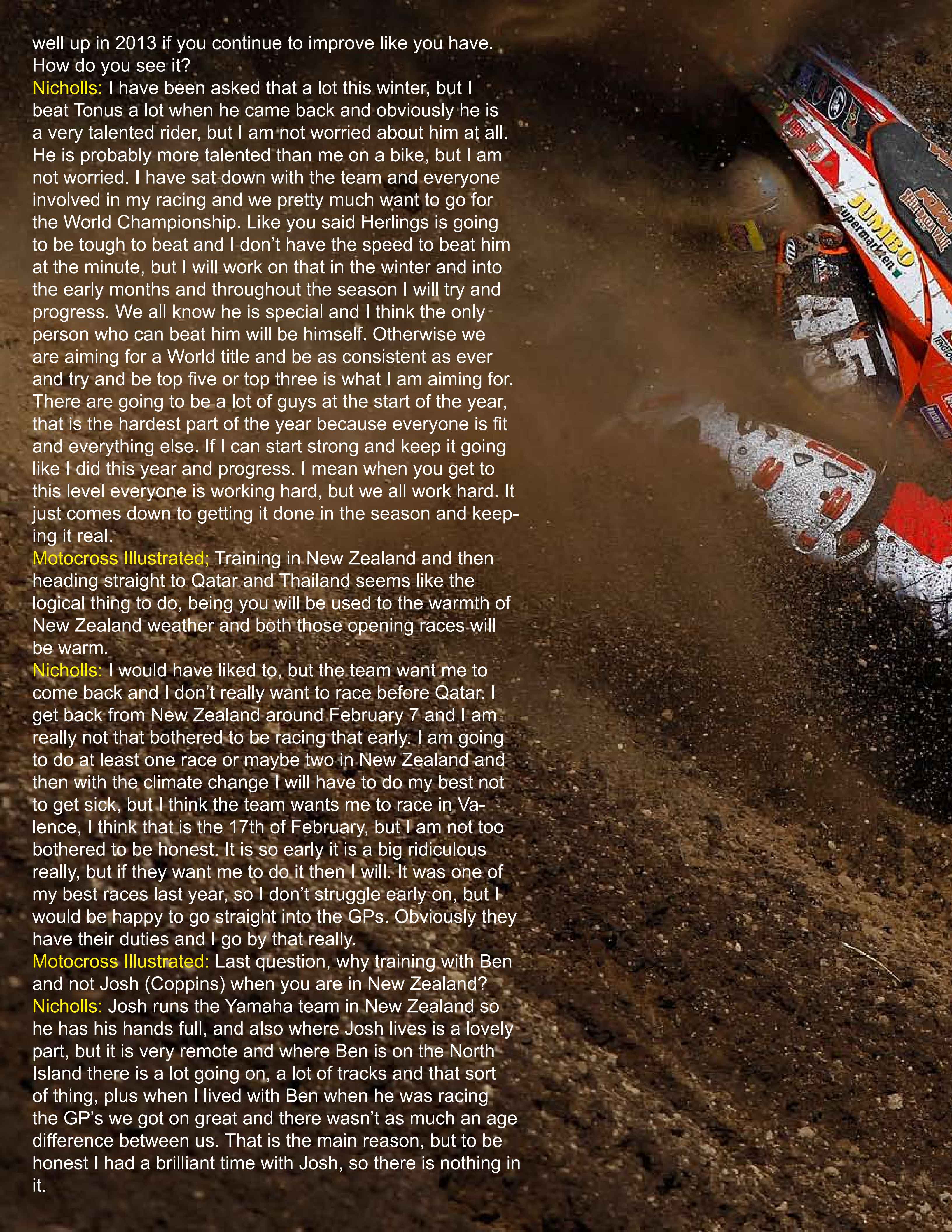

well up in 2013 if you continue to improve like you have. How do you see it?

Nicholls: I have been asked that a lot this winter, but I beat Tonus a lot when he came back and obviously he is a very talented rider, but I am not worried about him at all. He is probably more talented than me on a bike, but I am not worried. I have sat down with the team and everyone involved in my racing and we pretty much want to go for the World Championship. Like you said Herlings is going to be tough to beat and I don't have the speed to beat him at the minute, but I will work on that in the winter and into the early months and throughout the season I will try and progress. We all know he is special and I think the only person who can beat him will be himself. Otherwise we are aiming for a World title and be as consistent as ever and try and be top five or top three is what I am aiming for. There are going to be a lot of guys at the start of the year, that is the hardest part of the year because everyone is fit and everything else. If I can start strong and keep it going like I did this year and progress. I mean when you get to this level everyone is working hard, but we all work hard. It just comes down to getting it done in the season and keeping it real.

Motocross Illustrated; Training in New Zealand and then heading straight to Qatar and Thailand seems like the logical thing to do, being you will be used to the warmth of New Zealand weather and both those opening races will be warm.

Nicholls: I would have liked to, but the team want me to come back and I don't really want to race before Qatar. I get back from New Zealand around February 7 and I am really not that bothered to be racing that early. I am going to do at least one race or maybe two in New Zealand and then with the climate change I will have to do my best not to get sick, but I think the team wants me to race in Valence, I think that is the 17th of February, but I am not too bothered to be honest. It is so early it is a big ridiculous really, but if they want me to do it then I will. It was one of my best races last year, so I don't struggle early on, but I would be happy to go straight into the GPs. Obviously they have their duties and I go by that really.

Motocross Illustrated: Last question, why training with Ben and not Josh (Coppins) when you are in New Zealand?

Nicholls: Josh runs the Yamaha team in New Zealand so he has his hands full, and also where Josh lives is a lovely part, but it is very remote and where Ben is on the North Island there is a lot going on, a lot of tracks and that sort of thing, plus when I lived with Ben when he was racing the GP's we got on great and there wasn't as much an age difference between us. That is the main reason, but to be honest I had a brilliant time with Josh, so there is nothing in it.

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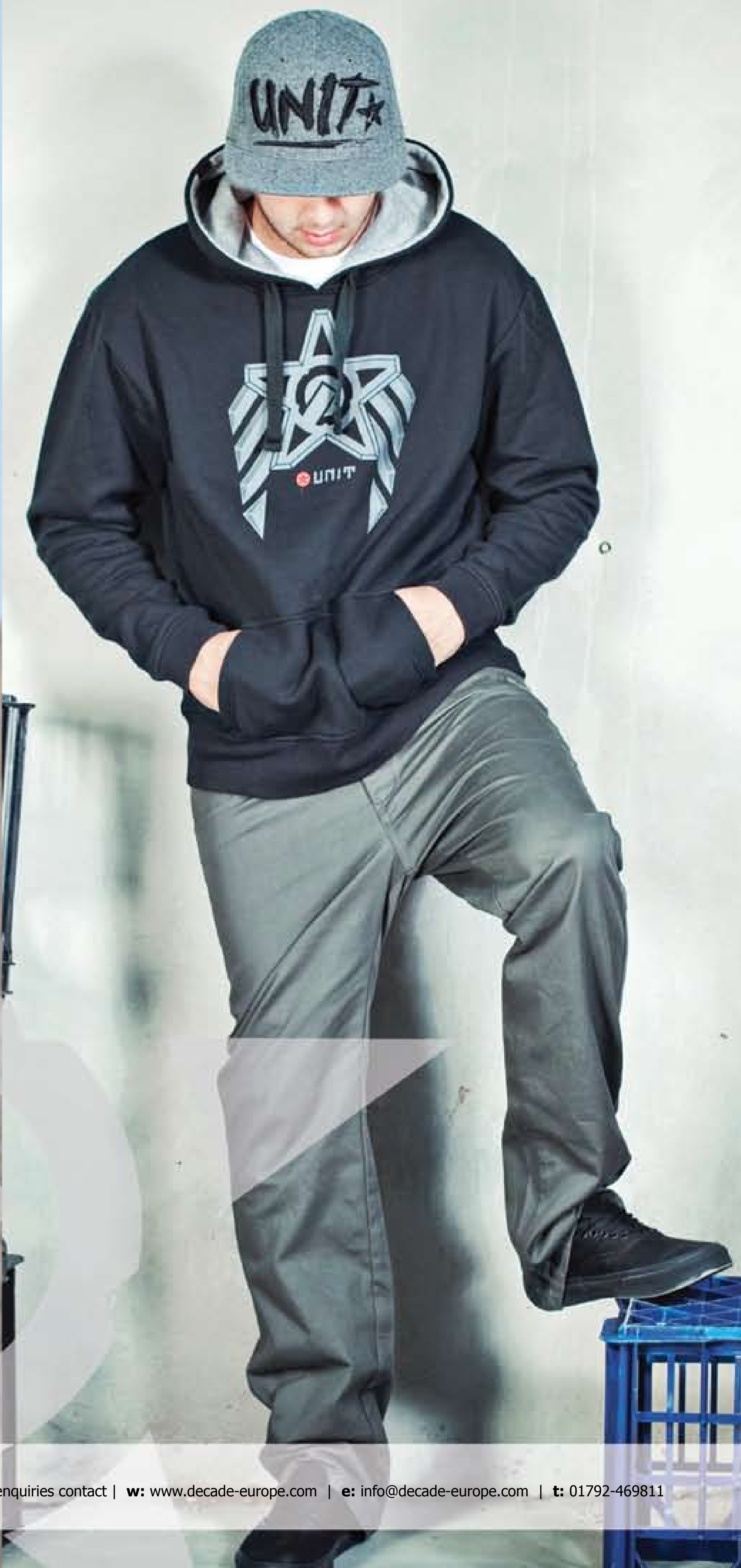

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BATTLE STATIONS MX1 AND MX2

MX 1 AND MX 2 COMBINED SOME LOVE IT, SOME DO NOT, HOWEVER FOR THE FANS THIS IS THE HIGHLIGHT OF THE LAST DECADE

IMAGES BY RAY ARCHER STORY BY GEOFF MEYER

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STEFAN EVERTS HIS OPINION

Stefan Everts is the king of Grand Prix Motocross. With 10 World Motocross Championships he has been involved in the sport since he was a small child. Everts who works for the Red Bull KTM Factory team has a good feeling about something new, but also knows it is going to be hard work for the MX2 riders in the International events.

“I am open for new things, and KTM are positive about this change, but I have some doubts about it, but it is just my opinion. For me personally as a former racer I have some question marks. I know from the past racing in the Motocross of Nations against the 500cc and 250cc bikes that your race can sometimes be influenced by the bigger bikes. On some occasions you are faster, but you cannot over take them because they have more power.

“The MX2 riders will have a big disadvantage and also there will be races where it is more and some where it will be less. For me it could change a race result and maybe even a Championship. From what I understand it is 2013 for just the races in Qatar, Thailand, Brazil and Mexico and then in 2014 it will be totally mixed. One moto for MX1, one for MX2 and a mixed race in all 18 rounds.

“The point of view that it will be better for the spectators I understand, and for sure it will make it more interesting, but on the other hand I think it is important to have an MX2 class and keep the MX2 class alive for our young kids to learn and get experience and if you start to combine you lose that part a little.

“As far as for Jeffrey Herlings, the points will be calculated the same way, and he will often be the first MX2 rider, but if you have to make a comeback from a first corner crash, and you have to pass some MX1 riders, that will be difficult. A rider might struggle to make up places against the biggest bikes.

"I think Herlings will race the MX1 guys, he will want to beat everyone, maybe at the end of the season he might ride carefully and take calculations, but he will want to race the MX1 guys and the better his race will be better for his confidence. For other MX2 riders their confidence will be a lot harder.

"I think for a fan it is a lot better, they will see one race less, but they get to see the best all against each other, which at some GPs it will be really interesting. I mean 2014 is going to be really interesting to see how the MX2 guys do against the MX1 riders in some of the circuits in Europe. I am looking forward to seeing how that turns out.

"That night race in Qatar is something new and for me it is more interesting than the combined races. We have to see how things go, we had been to some strange countries when I was racing and it was usually a one off GP and we never went back. I hope that there are a lot of MX fans in Qatar, like Brazil, because that gives a good atmosphere."

JAMIE DOBB HIS OPINION

Jamie Dobb is the 2001 World MX2 Champion, the first British rider to win the MX2 class and also the last British rider to win a World Motocross Championship. Dobb is also good friends with MX1 rookie Tommy Searle and gives us his opinion on the rule changes to combine MX1 and MX2.

"I mean they have those races because there are not enough riders in those overseas races. I mean it isn't good if there are only 20 riders on the start gate, so I agree with this change. I am all for it in the overseas races, because it will mean there are only good guys in the field.

"We had in the British Championship, we had that race at the end of the day.

"For next year my only concerns is what happens if the 2014 Championship leader gets cleaned out in the first moto can he then run the Superfinal or is he out of the event all together? I understood the top 20 go into the final moto Super-final. I mean I don't know the complete idea around it, maybe you can tell me something else?
"I think you will find the MX2 guys like Herlings will finish well up, even has a chance of winning races, but it could have made it more difficult as it was with Tommy and him this year. You do not want 450 guys getting in the way.

"You will be classed on points for your class, so there is no point any MX2 guy getting into it with an MX1 guy and you can always look at the negative or positives. I am a little concerned with some things.
"Another question is this. Tommy lost 50 points in Italy this year because he had problems in one moto, he then came from way back in the second moto to finish second, so he only lost 28 points, if he had been in this Super-final deal would he have missed the Superfinal because of that first moto DNF? Meaning he would have lost 50 points and not just 22. I am all for looking at new things, but I don't know the full story on how they are going to do it.

"I am all for change, we are doing a World Championship and I think it is important to go to these races, places like Qatar, or Thailand, I like that idea. I just need to get a better idea of what the final rules will be for 2014."

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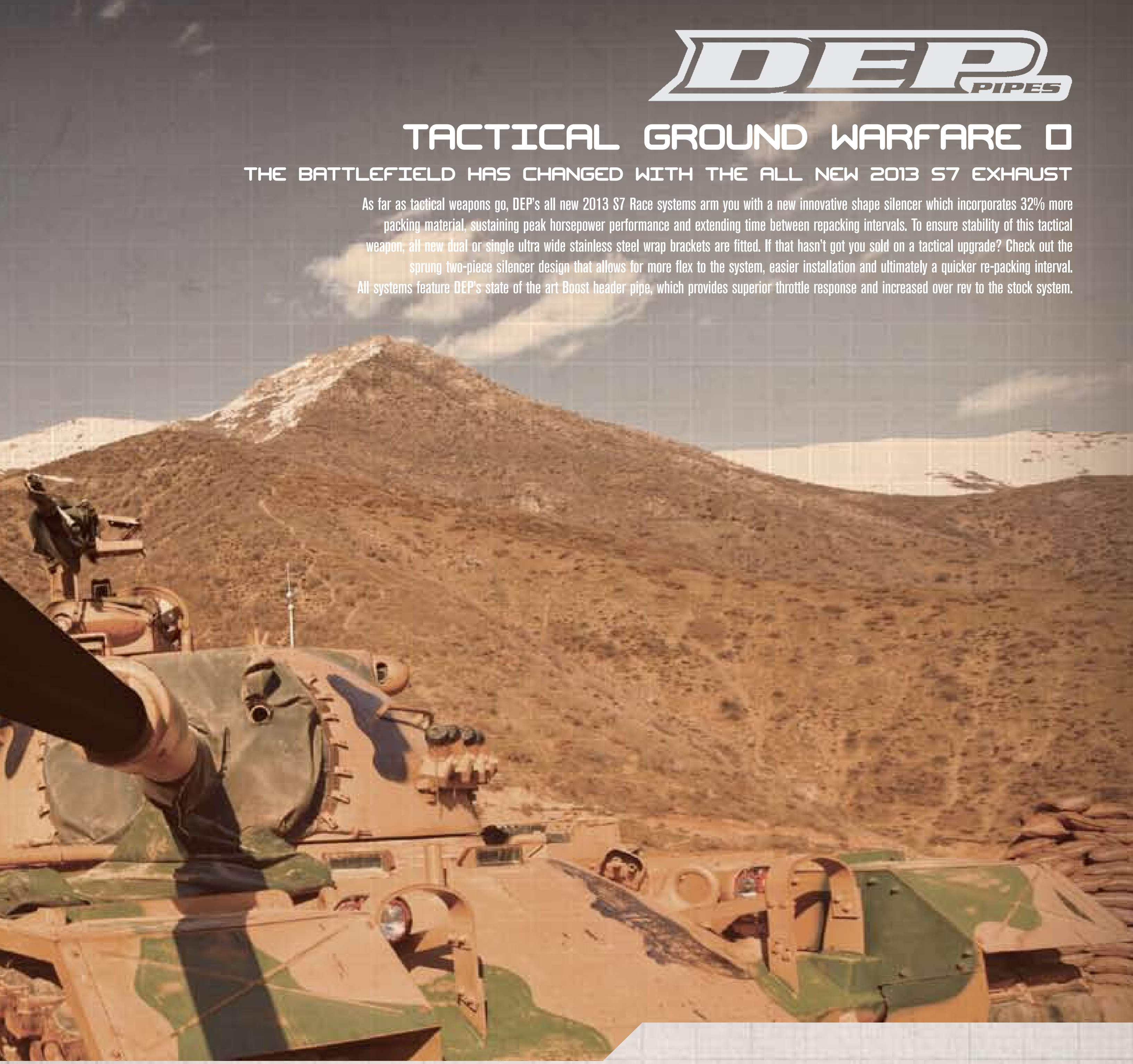

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SHAKESPEAR AND MOTOCROSS

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“The riders pour out of the gate, and it seems as if Slicky Joe has got the clear holeshot. One rider’s start clip seems to have got stuck, and he’s riding low. They round the first corner, and hit the whoops section. Slicky Joe is roosting everyone, and the following riders are tugging furiously at their roll-offs. Potato Pete opted for tear-offs, but they think these will be finished after the first lap.

They’re approaching the step-up now, and Slicky Joe is scrubbing it like anyone’s business. Potato Pete is throwing a massive whip, but lands a bit awkwardly. The velcro on his kidney belt is looser than the bushings on a 1978 Yamaha IT monoshock, and it lets go, wrapping itself somewhere in the vicinity of his knee braces. His chest protector also hit his bar-pad, and he must have a permanent Twinwall logo stamped in there now.”

The above narrative could have been rattled off through tinny speakers at any of thousands of commentary towers at motocross races around the world. The commentator, possibly a whiskeymarinated toffee nose with red veins spattered across his face like country roads on a road map, would have worked himself into a tizzy of excitement describing the race..

Everyone within earshot would have half taken it in and understood every word, but wait, what if a motocross newbie were to have been brought to the track?

Let’s assume Grandpa Pete was convinced by the youthful enthusiasm of his grandson to swig an extra arthritis pill, don his best flannel shirt and corduroy pants with bright red suspenders and tottered down to the track. What would he make of words like “holeshot”, “scrub” and “whip” (in the motocross sense), and many words that fall untroubled on the ears of the initiated?

What we have here, gentle reader, is the phenomenon of jargon – words that are specific to a particular activity. Motocross, with its myriad of activities and situations one is likely to encounter, has developed a rich volume of jargon of its own – words that you will discover in relation to the sport, and little else.

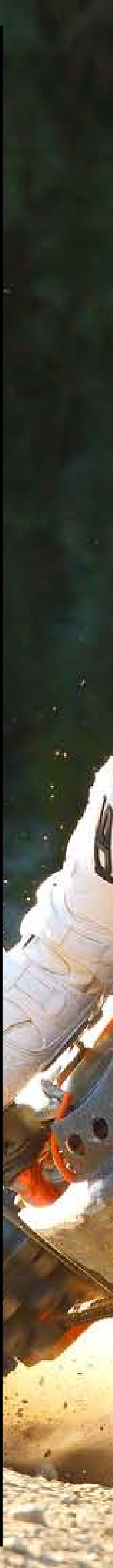
We have all at one time or another been in the presence of someone who has added to the language in innovative ways. This usually happens when things go wrong, and the new language is usually of a variety salty enough to flavour a year’s supply of potato chips. Our article here deals more with more urbane words, though, those that you can include in everyday language and utter at will without expecting a clip round the ears from your mom.

When this thought first struck what your humble reporter likes to refer to as his brain, the thought processes ambled on an on through those sometimes inscrutable mazes and ended up with Shakespeare. Shakespeare? The same guy that has made scholars over the generations swear eternal revenge should they ever run across him in a dark alley? Yes, that Shakespeare.

The Bard, as he is known in the vernacular.

You see, contrary to what long-suffering scholars might like to believe, I think Shakespeare was quite a remarkable guy, and rather hip too. Shakespeare, believe it or not, was actually quite a bit of a boss in the linguistic department. If a word didn’t exist to describe the idea he wanted to convey, he simply invented it, and in this way, he contributed thousands of words to the English language.

When you discover some of the words he invented, you start to think that he actually wasn’t such a nerd at all. Some of the words attributed to him are “bump,” of which there are enough on a track; “countless,” the number of world titles Stefan Everts has; “dislocate,” describing a shoulder after a disagreeable interaction with terra firma; “frugal” which refers to a team manager after the first two or three races; “obscene,” referring to the amount of money diving footballers make as compared to motocrossers, and “suspicious,” describing the state of mind of a clerk of the course when your 125cc bike pulls 50 metre



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holeshots on the 250cc opposition in the MX2 class.

Shakespeare was one of the boys therefore, I reckon. Moreover, I'm pretty sure he would have loved motocross.

It has all the elements of life that he found so fascinating and included in his writings.

You have striving and strife, good people and evil, hilarity and heartbreak. The are heroes and villains, plots and sub-plots, benevolence and backstabbing. And the odds are sky-high.

It is not too much of a stretch, therefore, to imagine the man, with a hairstyle like a parody of 1970's motocross hero parking his bony *derriere* on a pavilion at a race event, ordering a pitcher of meade, pulling out his scroll and quill, and jot down some ideas for his next best-seller. The pitched battles in front of him, the incessant gossip behind, the microcosm of life that is motocross, would give him enough material for a whole anthology of works.

The publisher would smile, as would his financiers. The motocross scene would provide rich literary pickings, all the while slating his thirst for drama and excitement.

So taken was I with the idea, that I jotted down a line or two to simulate how Shakespeare might possibly have featured a motocross hero in one of his plays.

"Foorsooth, Lord Tonio, thou art verily a master astride thy iron steed. Thou scrubbeth yonder bump as if thou would be king."

Emboldened by a few (too many) red wines, I moseyed up to Stratford and read it out at the great man's graveside. It may have been the wine, but I swear I heard a chuckle from the grave because of my clumsy effort. More importantly, though, after that there was a distinct grunt of approval. The Bard reached out across the centuries, and the imaginary, but very realistic touch of his presence brought on a cold shiver. He was there, with us, making up words for the motocross fraternity.

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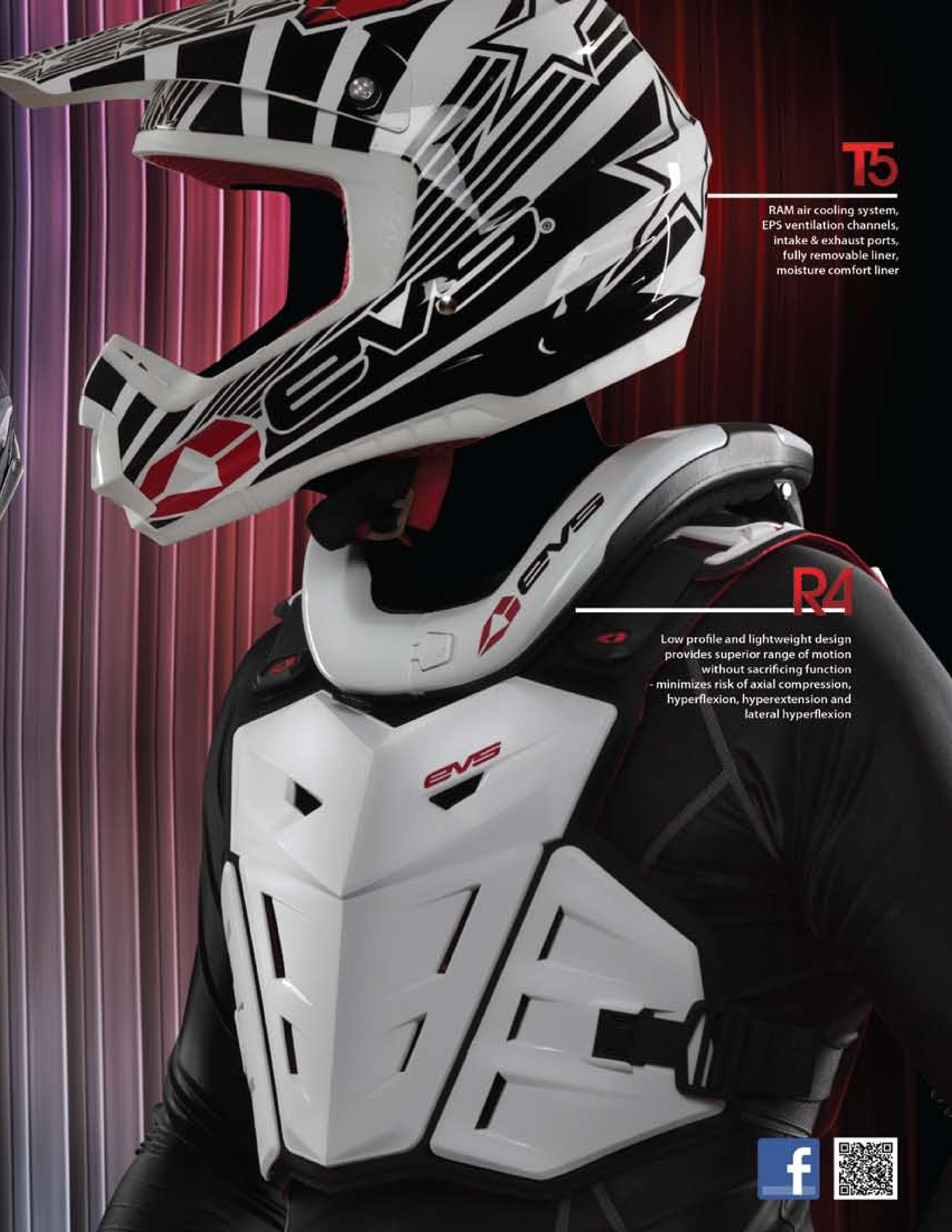

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HAT TRICK FOR TONY CAIROLI!

TRICAIROLI

Red Bull KTM's Italian factory rider Tony Cairoli takes his third consecutive MX1 World Championship title for KTM before the end of the season. The six-times Motocross Champion has won around half of all the races on his KTM 350 SX-F and has taken more than 80 percent of the available points – GRANDE TONY!

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JEFFREY HERLINGS
MX2 WORLD CHAMPION!

ORANJE

The young Dutch rider from the Red Bull KTM Factory Racing Team celebrates his first senior World Championship title three days before his 18th birthday. Following Tyla Rattray in 2008, Marvin Musquin in 2009 and 2010 and Ken Roczen in 2011, Herlings is the fifth rider in a row to take the MX2 World title with the KTM 250 SX-F!

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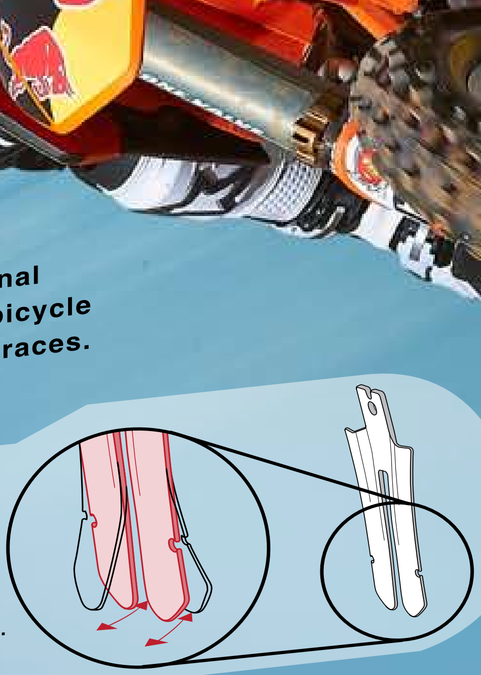

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Antonio Cairoli - MX1 | Jeffrey Herlings - MX2

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JEFFREY HERLINGS INTERVIEW

BRING ON THE CHALLENGE OF 2013

STORY GEOFF MEYER - IMAGES RAY ARCHER

In a time when great champions such as Antonio Cairoli, Chad Ree
James Stewart, Ryan Villopoto and Ryan Dungey are adding to th
legacy, the youth of Motocross is preparing for that next step. Kenn
Roczen, Eli Tomac, Blake Baggett, and Jeffrey Herlings are daring
have one eye on the 450cc champions. For Herlings the biggest c
lenges are just around the corner and the first challenge comes fro
taking on the MX1 class elite on his 250cc KTM.

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The 2012 FIM World MX2 Champion Herlings was the KIng of the MX2 class, and his performance at the 2012 Monster Energy Motocross of Nations also puts him in a very comfortable place. Is he the best MX2 rider in the World at the moment, that is anyones guess. Confidence wise he has put himself in that bracket of very good MX2 riders an d as his confidence builds so to do his results.

In 2013 he will battle the MX1 boys in four rounds of the FIM World Motocross Championships. For most MX2 riders the combined races means a tough day at the office, but for Herlings it is just another chance to show how good he really is.

MXILL: Jeffrey, what do you think of the new rule change that MX1 will race against MX2 in the races in Qatar, Thailand, Mexico and Brazil?
Herlings: Well, you know on an MX2 bike it is pretty unfair, for sure in Mexico because of the altitude, and competing against MX1 bikes. I think we have to respect the rule and just make the most of it. I think for me it's pretty cool, because I get to race against guys like Cairoli and De Dycker and all those guys, and if I want to go to MX1 in 2014 I know what to expect. It is going to be difficult with the horsepower, but for the fans and the television and to promote it is going to be nice to see, it will be an awesome event.
MXILL: How will you entered these races, with the thought of racing the MX1 guys or just being top MX2 rider?
Herlings: As a rider you always look for new challenges, and my next challenge is to get another World Championship. It is going to be 18 rounds, so it will be difficult to go undefeated, but I don't give up that dream, 36 motos and it is going to be tough, I am going to try and win as much as I can do. The first moto is in Qatar in three months and it is going to be way tougher to beat Cairoli than the other MX2 guys, it is going to be hard on an MX2 bike. I have less horsepower and it is going to be hard to get a good start. If I get 5th in the MX1/MX2 race I will be pumped, but I really try and go there and race with Antonio, I know it is out of reach, but I really want to try. It is almost impossible, but I will give everything to challenge those top guys.
MXILL: I have heard the circuits in Qatar and Thailand are sand. Have you heard anything?
Herlings: I have seen images from Thailand the Dutch trainer Jan Postmar is there and he has shown me images of the track. I have seen some movies and it is sand, not like Lierop, Lommel or even Valkenswaard, but it is sand and that is going to be an advantage for me. It is possible that I could win that, it is going to be difficult, but I can do it. Qatar I have not seen anything from the track, I just know it is going to be new and I want to get the KTM on top of the box.
MXILL: Changing the subject a little. You were clearly the fastest guy in Lommel at the MXoN, but watching Antonio go 1-1 must have been difficult, because everyone talked about him going 101. How was that?
Herlings: He went 1-1 and he was the strongest guy in the opening moto, and in the second moto he was the only one I really raced with, but he started off with a holeshot and I started off crashing in the first corner. He rode his own pace and had nobody in front of him and I had to pass 38 riders and by the time I got into second he was like 30 seconds in front, I still managed to close that gap, but then with two laps to go I was on his rear wheel and I couldn't get him. It was tough, because I didn't have a long break between the motos, but I felt like I was the fastest guy there, and I felt comfortable to say that and to be the fastest sand rider in the planet. I think if I had not gone down in the first corner I could have won that moto also. He went 1-1 but I still felt like the fastest guy there.
MXILL: I have to admit I have always liked your honesty and maybe I understand you better because I live in Holland and understand the Dutch way of talking, being straight forward and saying what they think, but you made a lot of enemies in 2012. Did you learn anything from what happened?
Herlings: I made loads of mistakes and a lot of times I was wrong, I am happy to admit that. I mean with Tommy we had a horrible year on and off the track, it wasn't nice racing each other, but I saw him at a practice track and we sat down for 10 minutes and talked and it is going to be way nicer to race with him in the future. I am pretty sure we will race each other again in the next three or four years. He is a really good rider and obviously I will race him again in Qatar and we won't be good friends, but we will get on okay from now on.
MXILL: How about Mel Pocock?
Herlings: As for Mel Pocock, we did some riding last Friday and I asked him if he wanted to go to a party with me, but he couldn't go, but it is all good with him now and I don't have any enemies on the track. I tried to learn from my mistakes. I just hope I have a good 2013 and don't make as many mistakes as in 2012.
MXILL: Last question, America? Speaking to Antonio he has no desire to go and live in America, and knowing the Dutch a little, living in America compared to living in USA is very different. What is your goal, do you want to race in America?
Herlings: Well, with all the rules changing, so you can only defend your Championship once in the MX2 class and also the changes to the MX1 and MX2 class racing against each other,

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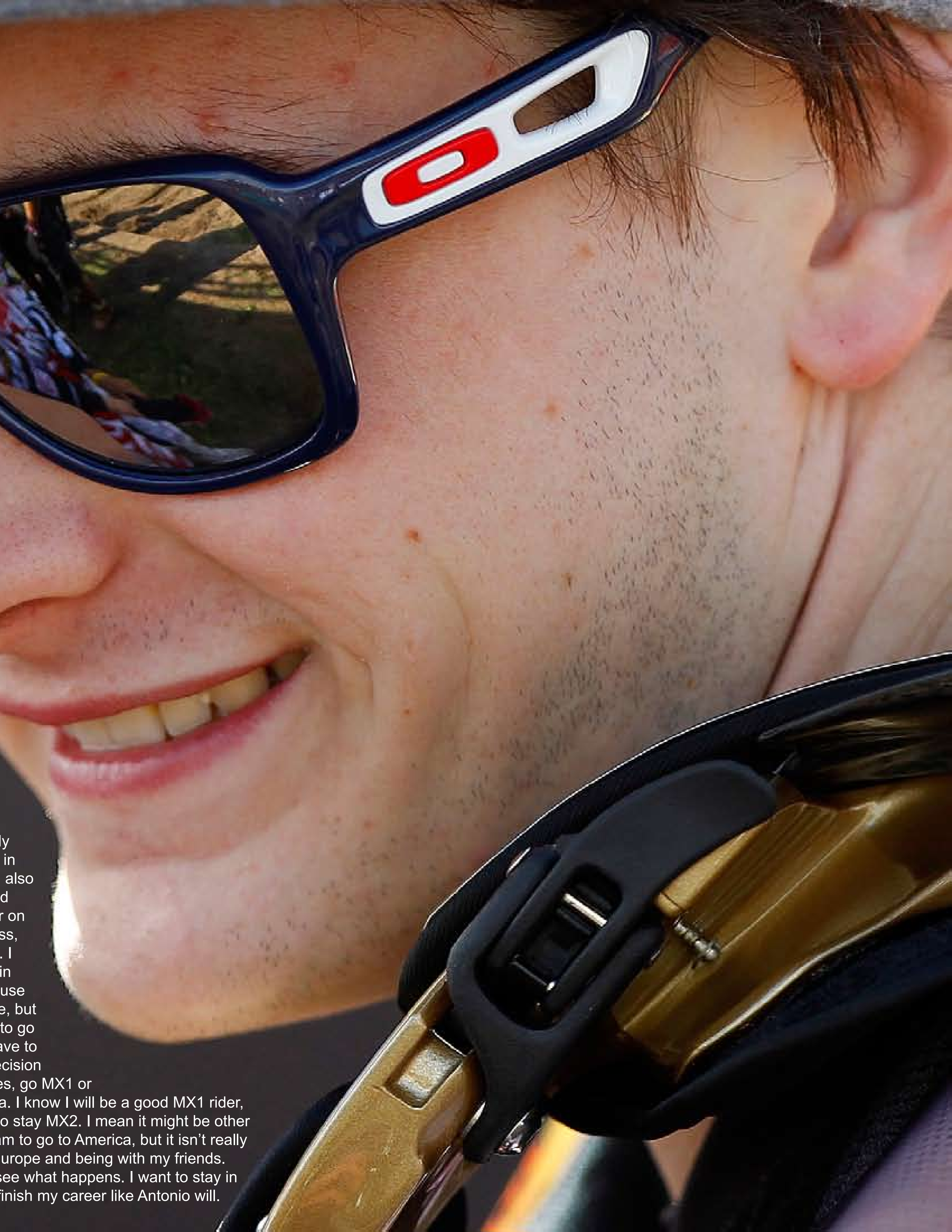

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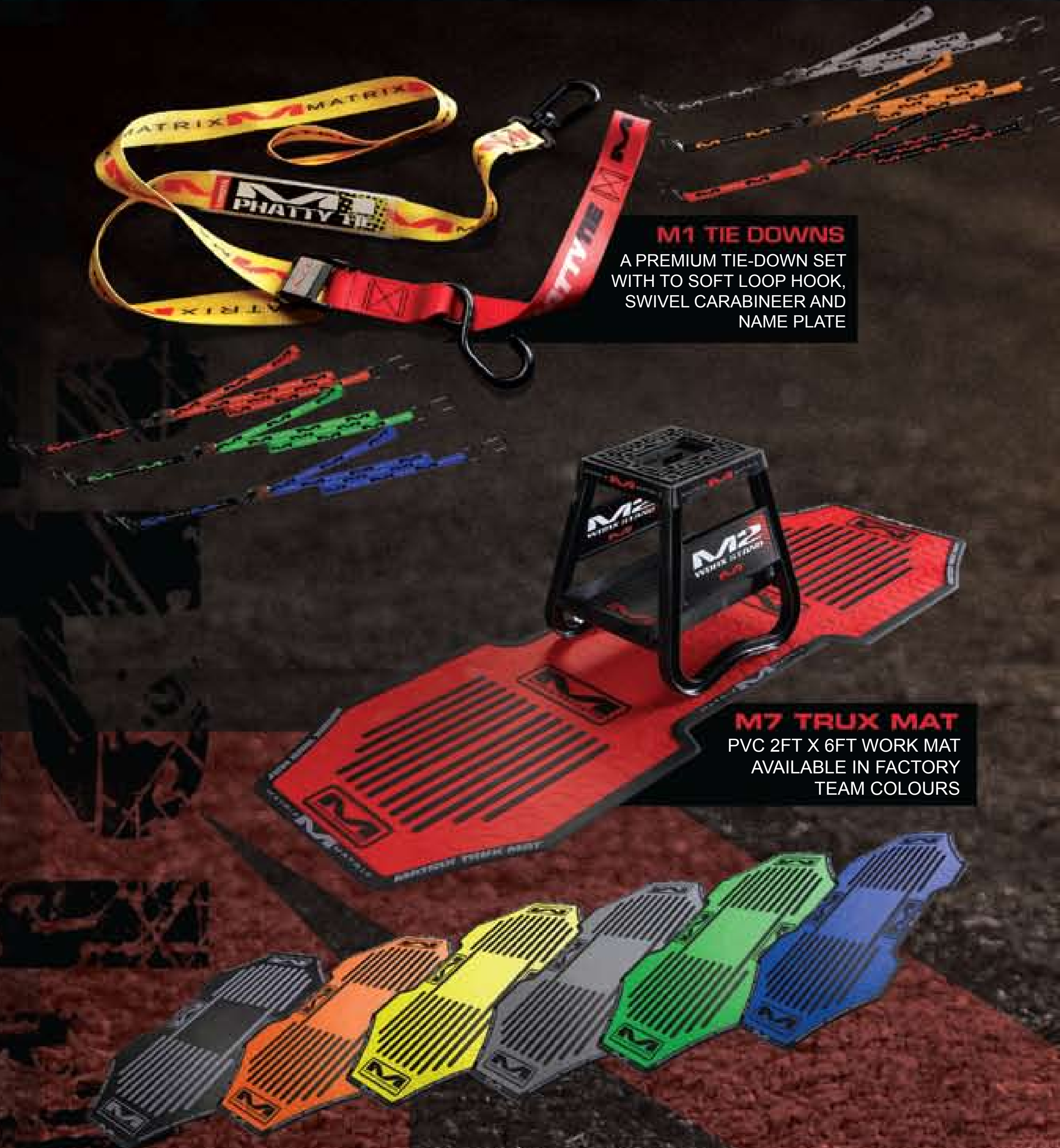
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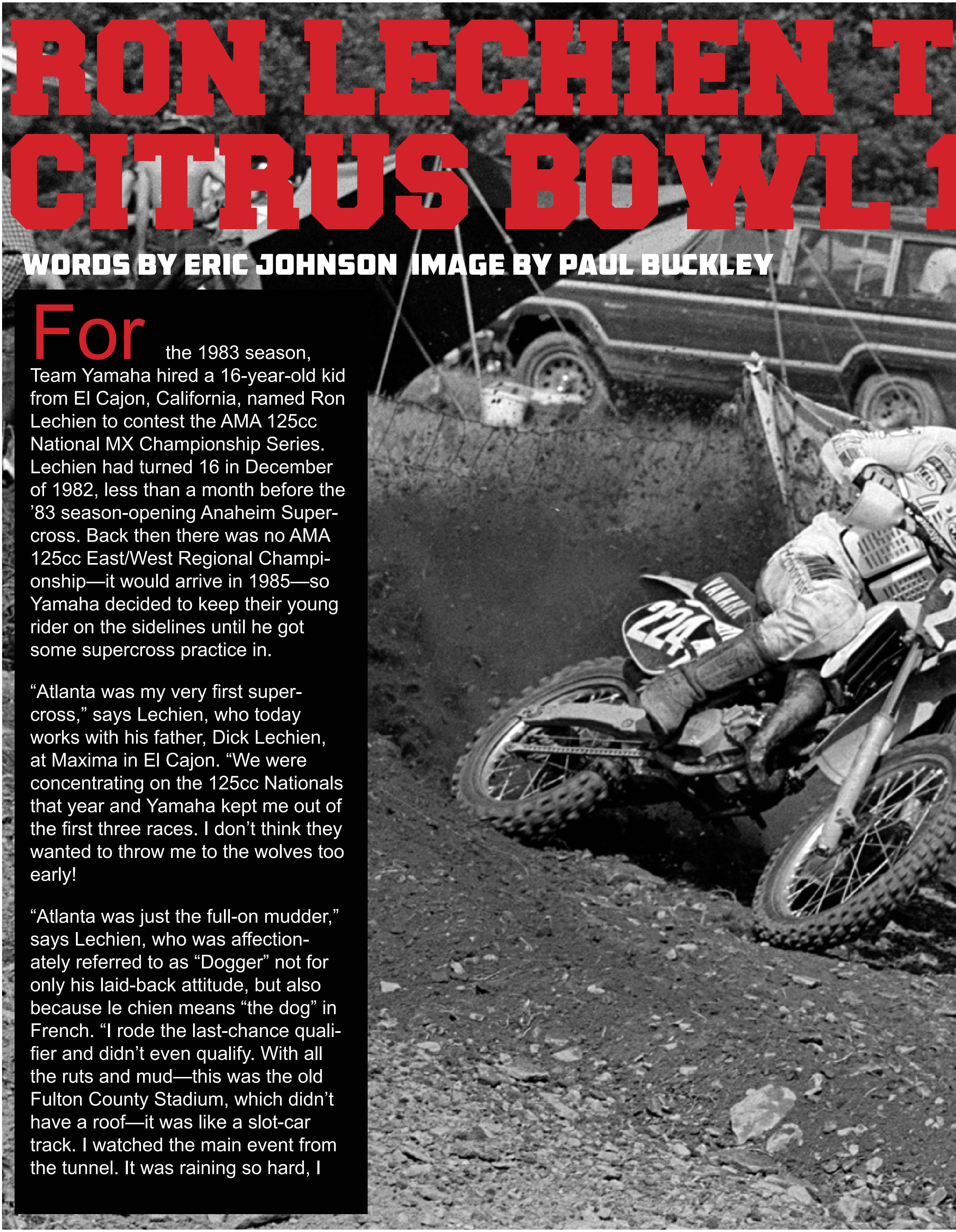

For the 1983 season, Team Yamaha hired a 16-year-old kid from El Cajon, California, named Ron Lechien to contest the AMA 125cc National MX Championship Series. Lechien had turned 16 in December of 1982, less than a month before the ’83 season-opening Anaheim Supercross. Back then there was no AMA 125cc East/West Regional Championship—it would arrive in 1985—so Yamaha decided to keep their young rider on the sidelines until he got some supercross practice in.

“Atlanta was my very first supercross,” says Lechien, who today works with his father, Dick Lechien, at Maxima in El Cajon. “We were concentrating on the 125cc Nationals that year and Yamaha kept me out of the first three races. I don’t think they wanted to throw me to the wolves too early!

“Atlanta was just the full-on mudder,” says Lechien, who was affectionately referred to as “Dogger” not for only his laid-back attitude, but also because le chien means “the dog” in French. “I rode the last-chance qualifier and didn’t even qualify. With all the ruts and mud—this was the old Fulton County Stadium, which didn’t have a roof—it was like a slot-car track. I watched the main event from the tunnel. It was raining so hard, I

HE 1983

couldn't even see across the track! Mark Barnett won the main and I thought he was an animal."

Lechien would compete at Daytona, Dallas, Pontiac, Kansas City, and Washington, D.C., steadily gaining confidence and working on the fundamentals of riding 250cc supercross against the likes of David Bailey, Broc Glover, Jeff Ward, Johnny O'Mara, and (before he got hurt) Rick Johnson. Then, on Saturday morning, June 11, Lechien idled out onto Orlando Citrus Bowl supercross track for practice."I was gaining confidence and felt better with each supercross I rode," Lechien explains. "When I first turned pro, my dad stopped going to the races with me. As an amateur, I had spent so much time with my dad that the way our relationship was, it was like I always wanted to do good for my dad. Orlando was the first supercross he actually went to with me my rookie season."

Along with such fierce competitors as Bob Hannah, Mark Barnett, and Mike Bell (plus all those other guys mentioned above), Lechien took his time learning the Citrus Bowl circuit. "The way the track was configured, there was a start a chicane, some whoops, then three or four pretty good-size jumps," he remembers. "In practice, I doubled one of them. After I did, I noticed that nobody else was doing it, so I decided right then and there not to do it again. "Back then the teams weren't filming practice and stuff like they do now, so guys like Johnny O' and David [Bailey] didn't even know that I had that double down," Lechien laughs. "In fact, I didn't even do the double in my heat races. I saved it for the main event!"

Later that evening came the 20-lap main. "I got a pretty good start—I think I was in about fourth," the Dogger says. "When we came up to the double jump, I hit it, flew by a bunch of guys, and landed right next to O'Mara, who was leading the race. Johnny lost the front end in the next turn and I was in the lead. "After that, I put my head down and took off," Lechien continues. "It didn't take long for me to build up a 15- to 20-second lead. I rode conservatively, watched my lines, made sure I stayed up, and the rest was history."

The 16 year-old Californian on the #224 black-and-yellow Yamaha YZ250 had won his first professional AMA event. Shockingly, it came in a 250cc supercross—Lechien would win his first 125 National eight days later at Lake Whitney, Texas. "I was ecstatic with the wins," he says. "I was like, 'I did it!' I proved to myself that I could run with those guys. What was weird, though, was that it was so easy. It was mind-boggling to me that it was so easy to win that race. I guess it was always like that for me. All of my best races were when I felt like it was so easy to win. Whenever I would ride my hardest and give it all I had, I'd finish in fifth or sixth."

Lechien would go on to win 25 more AMA events (10 125cc Nationals, six 250cc Nationals, two 500cc Nationals, and seven 250cc supercrosses), as well as the 1985 AMA 125cc National Championship before retiring in the late 1980s. Despite some ups and downs in his personal life (which you can read about in the definitive piece on Lechien, "What the Hell Happened to Ron Lechien?" in the April/May 2000 issue of *Racer X*), Lechien remains one of the most charismatic figures in American motocross history.

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J.M.BAYLE A MOTOCROSS LEGEND

IN A WORLD OF KINGS THIS FRENCHMAN WAS THE BEST OF THEM ALL

STORY BY AMA IMAGES BY RAY ARCHER

Jean Michel Bayle is a multi-time AMA and World Motocross Champion who later turned to road racing, where he also enjoyed success on the world stage. Over the course of his career he raced with a variety of manufacturers, including Kawasaki, Honda, Aprilia, Team Roberts KR3, and Yamaha. He has also piloted cars in off-road rally and touring car races.

Born April 1, 1969 in Manosque, France, Jean Michele Bayle began riding motorcycles at age 6. He raced throughout the early 1980s as an amateur, and at age 13 won the 1982 Provence Championship. In 1985 at age 16 he entered the 250cc class at the Paris Bercy Supercross, racing aboard a Kawasaki. While his Bercy results were not impressive, this was his first taste of racing against an international field of competitors, including many AMA Supercross stars of the time.

In 1986 Bayle finished 4th in the French National 125cc Motocross Championship. He also raced in the 125cc World Championship, where he earned points and finish
season's end. In 1987 he switched to Honda with
in the World 125cc Championship, the French Na
Motocross Championship, and the 250cc class of
National Supercross series. Bayle dominated the
class, winning his first national title, and earned 3
the World 125cc Championship. In 1988, he went
the World 125cc Motocross Championship, the Fr
125cc Motocross title, and the French 250cc Sup
In 1989, after consulting with Honda Racing's Rog
(also an AMA Hall of Fame member), Bayle plann
limited season in the U.S. aboard a 250cc machin
in the World 250cc Championship, and then retur
to race in the AMA 500cc Motocross Championsh
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nia, then entered and won the AMA 250cc Motocr
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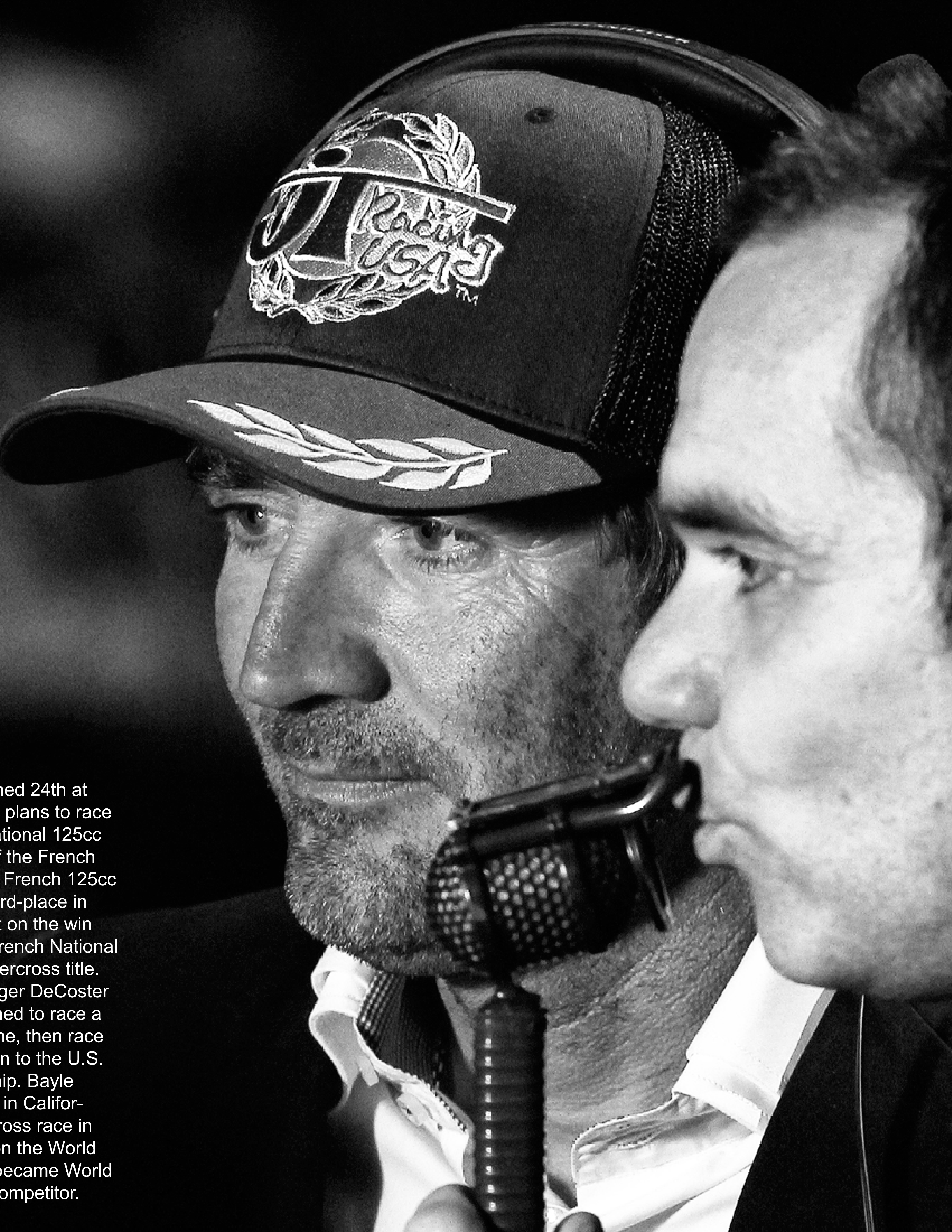

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He followed up with a win at the AMA 500cc Motocross race in New Berlin, New York, and finished that season ranked fifth overall while racing against such notable contemporaries as Jeff Ward, Jeff Stanton and Rick Johnson, among others.

In 1990 Bayle returned to the U.S. to race in the AMA 125cc Motocross Championship, where he earned three overall wins and was ranked fourth overall in points. He contested the AMA 250cc Supercross Series, earning five wins and finishing as runner-up for the title.

In 1991 Bayle and Honda set their sights on winning the AMA 250cc and 500cc Motocross Championships, as well as the AMA 250cc Supercross title. Bayle went on to earn three wins and the title of the six-race AMA 500cc Motocross Championship (the remaining three races were won by Jeff Ward). He also won the AMA 250cc Motocross Championship, and took the AMA 250cc Supercross Series title with eight wins.

Bayle entered the 1992 AMA 250cc Motocross Championship, taking a win at Troy, Ohio, and earning three wins in the AMA 250cc Supercross Series, but his career would change course for the 1993 season.

Having entered the 1992 French Grand Prix 250cc road race aboard a Honda, in 1993 Bayle switched entirely to road racing. He teamed with Aprilia
World 250cc Championship, f
season ranked 22nd, with a b
of 8th place at the British Gra
improved in 1994, earning top
ishes at the British and Czech
Grand Prix. Bayle continued w
for the 1995 World 250cc Cha
earning pole position at the Ar
Grand Prix.

In 1996 he moved up to the W
Championship riding a Team
Yamaha. He earned five top-f
and took pole position at the C
public GP. In 1997 he rode the
KR3 and finished the season
19th. He continued to race in
500cc Championship in 1998,

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position and a top-five finish at Imola aboard a Team Rainey Yamaha. He raced his final year in the World 500cc Championship in 1999 aboard the Proton Modenas KR3.

In 2002, Bayle teamed with Sébastien Gimbert and Nicolas Dussauge to win the Bol d’Or and the 24 Hours of Le Mans motorcycle road course endurance races. In the mid-2000s Bayle’s career took another turn as he moved to four wheels, competing in Touring Car and Off-Road Rally races in Europe.

José Butron | MX2 World Championship
Photograph: **Bavo Swijgers**

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RAGING WATERS

After an injury-ravaged three years, 21-year-old Todd Waters tore up the 2012 Monster Energy MX Nationals and is now widely regarded as one of Australia's brightest talents. But he's anything but your average motocrosser…

SIMON MAKKER iKAPTURE IMAGES, ANDY WIGAN

HissTHWACK. HissTHWACK. The curly-haired bloke kneeling at the end of the hallway puts the finishing touches to another doorjamb of his two-storey Gold Coast house, pressing the nail gun hard against the timber, then squeezing the trigger.

HissTHWACK. HissTHWACK. "That should just about do it," he says, straightening to admire his handiwork. Looking every bit the tradie – complete with paint-spattered navy polo shirt, footy shorts and toolbelt – the figure Todd Waters cuts is far removed from the way most would envisage Australia's fastest motocross racer, and how he spends his spare time.

Fresh from the 2012 Monster Energy MX Nationals season, most racers are taking a well-earned break, happily sucking on an ice-cold beer and indulging in a few other guilty pleasures. But Todd Waters isn't your average racer. As a qualified cabinet-maker, the Motul Pirelli Suzuki shredder is more than handy with the tools and is renovating his Southport home. He's converted a portion of the downstairs floorspace into a standalone apartment that he shares with his girlfriend of three years, Gillian, while he rents out the upstairs section to pay the lion's share of the mortgage. It's a remarkably mature mindset for a 21-year-old; most racers his age blow their money on lowering their ute, hustling the blackjack tables or buying all manner of big boys' toys. Waters, on the other hand, is already thinking long-term.

"I bought the house when I was 19, even though my parents didn't think it was a good idea," he says, showing off his immaculately renovated bathroom. "They thought it would tie me down to Australia too much if I wanted to take my racing overseas, but I saw a few of the riders making great money and spending it like it was going to last forever. My goal is to do the best I can with racing, and at the end of my career I want to have something – like a couple of houses – to show for it."

After his most successful professional season yet, Waters' stocks have skyrocketed. Combined with the fact his 12-month Suzuki contract is up at the end of the season, there's plenty of wheeling and dealing going on behind the scenes, and offers that'll surely help see his dreams fulfilled sooner rather than later.

THE TURNING POINT

Waters grew up in the hills behind Cairns, in far north Queensland, with his parents and younger sister. As a grom, he rode the local club races on his 65 with the tireless support of his parents, who remain actively involved with his career today. In fact, Todd's father, Steve, wrenched for him under the Motul Pirelli Suzuki tent this year.

"I love working with Dad. He gets me to dig deep when it's needed, and when he writes 'all heart' on my pit board, it really hits home. If another mechanic wrote the same thing, I'd be thinking, 'Yeah, well, I'm trying my best here, mate! Why don't you come and give it a go?'," Waters laughs, pouring himself a glass of water. "Having Dad with me definitely helped the transition from Honda to Suzuki this year. We've worked together since I was eight and he knows exactly what needs doing and what to say to get the best out of me."

Until he was 12, Waters hid his talents in the FNQ hills, dominating club days on the weekends and attending school during the week. At the end of his last year on a 65cc, the Waters family made the mammoth drive to South Australia for the 2003 Australian Junior MX Nationals. Among a field of the sport's up-and-comers, including Josh Cachia and Tye Simmonds, a wide-eyed Todd Waters qualified fifth in his class.

"I remember being on the startline next to Josh Cachia and I heard his old man whisper to him, 'You won't have to worry about this guy, mate'," he reveals, deadly serious. "It really fired me up; I beat everyone by half the track and won the U12 65cc title. ➘

Todd and his old man, Steve, slotted straight into Jay Foreman's low-key Team Motul Pirelli Suzuki outfit.

CAREER LANDMARKS

2003	Won the U12 65cc title at his first Australian Junior Motocross Nationals.
2004	Won the 13-14 Years 85cc title at the Australian Junior Nationals.
2005	Won both the 14-U15 Years 85cc and 13-14 Years 125cc titles at the Australian Junior Nationals.
2006	Won 15 Years 125cc and second in the 15 Years 250F titles at the Australian Junior Nationals.
2007	Won first-ever Pro Lites race at Toowoomba and finished second on the day.
2007	Placed second in U19 MX Nats Championship.
2008	Finished 16th Overall in Pro Lites Championship.
2008	Claimed third Overall in his first Pro Open race at the MX Nats finale at Coolum.
2009	Won first two MX Nationals rounds in the Pro Opens before injuring foot.
2010	Ran 6th Overall in MX Nats Pro Open class, despite breaking collarbone.
2011	Sat out first six rounds of MX Nationals with wrist injury. Finished third at Moree and Coolum.
2012	Finished second to Josh Coppins in the MX Nationals MX1 Championship. Took Overall win at the Murray Bridge, Horsham and Coolum rounds.

> “DAD GETS ME TO DIG DEEP WHEN IT’S NEEDED, AND WHEN HE WRITES ‘ALL HEART’ ON THE PITBOARD, IT REALLY HITS HOME.”

When Waters looks like he's not trying, he's fast. That relaxed approach clearly worked for him this year.

And I think that was the turning point of my career."

Despite continuing to only ride on weekends, Waters' Junior career went from strength to strength: he won the 13-14 Years 85cc class in Tassie, then both the 14-U15 Years 85cc and 13-14 Years 125cc classes at Coolum, before finishing his stint in Juniors by winning the 15 Years 125cc title and second place in the 15 Years 250F class at Canberra. And throughout his Junior career, Waters, Tye Simmonds and Dean Ferris always seemed to find each other on the track.

"It doesn't matter what we do away from the track, I know if Tye turns up to the same track as me, we'll end up racing each other," Todd explains. "The same goes with Dean Ferris. The good thing is none of us three are dirty racers, and we all have a great deal of respect for each other. We've never had to do the feisty 'pit visit' after a race."

GETTING SERIOUS

After riding for the factory KTM team through the Junior years, the Waters were told they'd have to do things off their own backs when Todd graduated to the Under 19s class in 2007. Todd and Steve drove three days from Cairns to Melbourne for the opening round at Broadford, picking up a stock bike and a pipe on the way down. Against the likes of Kirk Gibbs, Lawson Bopping and Brenden Harrison, Waters finished fifth, then backed it up with a second the next weekend at Penguin in Tassie.

The solid results on a stock machine saw KTM open their arms again, and Todd rewarded them by winning both motos at South Australia soon thereafter.

With his momentum and confidence brimming, series promoter Kevin Williams gave Waters a Pro Lites guest ride at the next round at Toowoomba, and the overwhelmed country kid chose a gate between Ryan Marmont and Mitch Hoad.

"I turned to Dad and said, 'Posters of these guys are hanging on my wall – I'm not meant to be lining up next to them!'," he grins. "But I got the holeshot! And 20 minutes into the moto, I was still leading and beginning to wonder what was going on. Jake Moss finally got by, but then I passed him back and rode to the win. It didn't really sink in, but in the next race I dropped it in the first turn and came from last back to sixth, and got second Overall on the day. I couldn't believe it. It was weird, because I passed Ryan Marmont thinking, 'I thought you were fast – what's happening here?'"

To prove it wasn't beginner's luck, Waters went 2-3 in the Pro Lites the next weekend at Mackay, before finishing out the remainder of the Under 19s championship with a second Overall behind Brenden Harrison.

After making such huge waves in his first outings in the Senior ranks, Waters stepped up to the Pro Lites class in '08, quitting his job to focus on motocross. But he fell into the trap of ➘

> "I WAS IN PLASTER FOR 13 WEEKS; I WENT FROM RACING WITH THE RED PLATE TO LITERALLY CRYING ON THE COUCH. I WAS DEVASTATED."

José Butron | MX2 World Championship

Photograph: **Bavo Swijgers**

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SCAR

Suzuki's Todd Waters (#47) and Cody Cooper (#10) nail the start at Appin. The boys went 2-3 in the MX1 title hunt.

overtraining and he went backwards. And with a string of injuries, mechanicals and DNFs, he finished the season in a lowly 16th place.

With nothing to lose, Waters stepped up to the Pro Open class for the final round at Coolum, and stormed to a couple of thirds. And from there, the die was cast. Waters realised he suited the bigger-bore bikes and signed a deal with the factory Honda team for 2009 to race Pro Opens.

RED PLATES & INJURY

With his career beginning to build steam, the 18-year-old began the 2009 season on a high note by winning the opening two rounds of the championship. However, just when it looked like he could run away with it, Waters ran over his foot while practising. Despite some major swelling and hardly being able to walk, he didn't tell the team and finished fourth at Toowoomba. He then caught the same foot under the bike when landing a jump and Mackay, forcing him to DNF.

"I thought I was just being a pussy and had a sprained ankle," he explains. "I went to the doctors after Mackay and was sent to Melbourne where they found I'd done extensive ligament and cartilage damage. I was in plaster for 13 weeks; I went from racing with the red plate to literally crying on the couch. I was devastated."

But Honda's Yarrive Konsky maintained the faith and re-signed Waters for 2010. The teenager promptly earned himself the red in the premier class and retained it until mid-season. But his decision to continue racing with a flat front tyre at the Toowoomba round to claim *some* points would be his undoing. It led to a massive crash, which broke his collarbone. The following day, he attended Andrew McFarlane's funeral with his arm in a sling before heading to hospital. The surgeons plated Waters' collarbone, and he returned the very next weekend. But his head wasn't in the game. He finished the season a disappointing sixth Overall,

> "I DID EVERYTHING I COULD TO BEAT JOSH, AND I CAN NOW SAY I COULDN'T DO IT. HE STRAIGHT UP BEAT ME."

Todd Waters and Ford Dale (below) have been training buddies for years. It's now paying off for both of them.

ACCORDING TO JAY FOREMAN...

"I'd kept an eye on Todd for a couple of years and could see a lot of potential in him," says Motul Pirelli Suzuki Team Manager, Jay Foreman. "Even though he'd been plagued by injury, I didn't think hiring him was a gamble; I could see past those injuries and circumstances and knew if I could get my hands on him, we'd be able to improve on his past performances. We worked hard on the bike all year. The stock RM-Z450 is a great starting point, but the bike ended up awesome, and Todd was open to changes and experimentation in an effort to get the most out of it.

"I'm really impressed with Todd's work ethic. I love seeing a rider who works as hard away from the track as we do. He's a physically big and strong bloke and can manhandle a 450, and I think Todd's enthusiasm and success had a positive effect on his teammate, Cody Cooper, too. Cody likes his bike set-up the way it is, but suddenly he wanted to start trying set-ups that Todd had and he became more open to changes and experimenting.

"For 2013, we'd love to keep both Todd and Cody on the team and we're working hard towards that. There are no certainties, but I know if he comes back for another year with Suzuki, we'll be able to turn up to Round 1 and contest for the win."

but another couple of podiums at the final round put his rivals on notice that he remained a title contender.

At the beginning of 2011, Waters was again struck down by injury while testing at Broadford. After a successful day where he felt he rode the best he'd ever ridden, he did a slow lap with a new shock absorber and crashed hard when the front wheel washed out landing off a tabletop. He fell awkwardly on his wrist and knew straight away it was dislocated. But that wasn't the half of it.

"I thought I'd be out for six weeks, but it turned out I'd dislocated it as well as broken the scaphoid and trapezium," he explains. "It was a mess and it required two operations and 16 weeks in plaster. It was my most complicated injury by far. My mechanic, Mike Landman, said, 'One day, you'll look back on these injuries and laugh'. But I look back now and I'm still not laughing."

Always proactive, Waters made the most of his time on the couch by completing his TAFE course in cabinetmaking. "It's funny, because in all my TAFE photos I'm busted up," he laughs. "As soon as I'd hurt myself, I'd phone the tutors and say, 'Hey, can I do my TAFE now?' They were pretty good about it, and it's great to have a skill to fall back on."

REDEMPTION

For 2012, Waters signed with Motul Pirelli Suzuki. The switch from the big, busy Honda operation to the smaller, more laid-back Suzuki affair suited the country kid, and he flourished under the guidance of Team Manager, Jay Foreman.

With the exception of a forgettable round at Coonabarabran (which proved to be the kryptonite to his 2012 campaign), Waters put Suzuki on the podium at nine of the 10 rounds this year, including round-wins at Murray Bridge, Horsham and Coolum.

Despite the fact Waters gained ground on Coppins through the middle of the season and heaped pressure on the wily Kiwi, the CDR Yamaha rider managed to put his head down and keep Waters at arm's reach when it was most needed, eventually claiming the MX1 championship.

"Every time I'd close the points up at a round, Josh would come out absolutely crazy in the next race," Waters says with a bemused smile. "He'd just bomb into the first turn so hard, as if he didn't care if he crashed. But he never did."

As Todd drove home from the final round of the 2012 Monster Energy MX Nationals at Coolum with his second-place championship trophy, he was rightfully proud of his efforts. Having an injury-marred three years didn't make his runner-up result any sweeter, but at least he wasn't sitting in front of the TV wondering 'what if'.

"Take away the disappointment of coming second, and I was proud of my efforts this year" he says. "I did everything I could to beat Josh, and I can now say I couldn't do it. He straight-up beat me," Waters openly admits, looking me fair in the eyes. "It felt good to finish the season on a win, though, and I know next year, barring injury, I'll be able to make another solid run at the title."

After all, racing against someone with as much experience as Coppins all season meant Todd learnt some valuable lessons in racecraft. "I can pass every other Aussie rider, but I can't get past Josh if he's by himself out front," he explains. "He rides all the inside lines and he does it just fast enough that you can't pass him. Then I'd sink into his pace and all of a sudden, he'd just start pulling away from me. It got so frustrating. The main thing I learnt from Coppins is how important the inside line is. You can sneak up the inside of other riders, but you can never do that with Josh. So many times, I'd try and set up a pass and find myself on the outside, trying to go the long way around. I want to be that inside guy from now on."

ALL MAPPED OUT

Waters' selection for the Australian team for the MX of Nations was one of ➘

“THERE’S NO WAY I CAN ACHIEVE WHAT REEDY’S ACHIEVED. HE WON HIS FIRST SUPERCROSS CHAMPIONSHIP AT 21, AND I’M STILL A LONG WAY FROM THAT.”

the biggest opportunities thrown his way so far. Even though the Australian Supercross season starts just two weeks after he, Lawson Bopping and Luke Styke return from the infamous Lommel track in Belgium, Waters’ focus is all about putting in a respectable showing against the world’s best motocross racers.

“I’ve never seen any of those guys race live, so I don’t know if they’re freaks or not,” he speculated before his trip. “I mean, I know the top-tier guys are going to be ridiculously fast, but I’m pretty sure that most of them put shoes on, just the same as the rest of us.”

From 2013, Waters will be following a two-year plan in Australia; instead of throwing himself in the deep-end in the USA, he plans to do a couple trips a year to race either in Europe or the US, then tackle a European campaign before ultimately ending up Stateside.

“I want to give myself time to mature and not try and do everything too soon,” he reveals, showing the sort of self-restraint that young motocrossers are not renowned for. “The temptation is to head straight to the US, but most Australians who have done that haven’t fared so well. You only really get one shot at it, so I want to do it properly. And I think you really need to be dominating at home before you make that move.”

At the same time, despite the growing hype surrounding this humble kid, he honestly doesn’t see himself as the next Chad Reed. “I’m 21 now, and there’s no way I can achieve what Reedy’s achieved,” he bluntly admits. “Chad won his first supercross championship at 21, and I’m still a long way from riding at that level. To tell you the truth, I don’t see anyone becoming the next Chad Reed – I can’t even see anyone coming through in Australia who can do what I did by stepping up and winning my first Pro race. I doubt any of the MXD-class guys could do that, and that’s a bit concerning to tell the truth.”

Whatever happens in the future, one thing is certain: Todd Waters is only just starting to arrive. ➘

FROM HIS RIVALS...

JOSH COPPINS - THE 2012 RIVAL

“For me, Todd was the standout Australian racer in the Pro Open class this year. It was almost a given that I would be racing against him at some stage every weekend, and when I was out front I knew he would be close behind. I was a little disappointed with the middle part of my season and I gave him a sniff of the title, and to his credit he took the chance with both hands and made a real fight out of it. As soon as I got my focus back, I was able to control the championship, but Todd was always right there; ready to capitalise if I made any errors. He definitely kept me honest and is a very consistent racer.”

CODY COOPER – THE TEAMMATE

“Todd Waters is a great guy to have as a teammate. He’s really easy to get along with and his family is awesome and always there to help out wherever they can. If either one of us had a problem, we’d help each other out, as we both wanted the other person to do the best they could. There was none of this ‘keeping cards close to your chest’ business. Todd is a fair racer and is definitely very clean on the track. You can easily read what he’s going to do out there and you can trust him not to do anything stupid or try and take you out. I can’t read some people, but I know that when I’m racing against Todd, it’s not going to be a dirty battle.”

BEN TOWNLEY – FROM THE FENCE

“The biggest thing that stands out to me is how solid and consistent Todd was as a racer all season. When you look at it, he was a title contender from Round 3 and showed he wanted to win it. I haven’t got to know him much this year, but I know if he can stay injury-free, he’s the complete package. Outside of my teammate, Brad Anderson, I backed Josh Coppins to win the championship, as it’s always good to see a Kiwi take it home. But more than that, I love seeing a good battle, and Todd really provided that this year. It was great for the series and I think he’ll be one to watch out for next year.”

LAWSON BOPPING – LONG-TIME RIVAL

“I’ve raced against Todd since 2007 when he first entered the Under 19 class and I can say he’s always consistent, he’s always fast and he never rubs in on you or plays dirty – on or off the track. I think this was his first injury-free season in years and, as a result, he stepped it up and was solid at every round. I had a great battle with him at the Wonthaggi round, and even though we were at each other, we both kept it clean. I have noticed that the rougher and more rutted a track gets, the faster he seems to go; Todd is an excellent rut rider.”

TYE SIMMONDS – LONG-TIME RIVAL

“I’ve grown up racing against Todd through my entire career, right from when we were on 65s. He’s been one of my biggest rivals from the first time he attended the Junior MX Nationals in 2003. I think this year, he showed his true colours and the potential he has, and the battles I had with him at Murray Bridge this year were like the good old days. Even though we always seem to find each other on the track, Todd is one of the cleanest and most consistent riders out there. If you piss him off, he’ll get fired up, but he’ll remain clean in his racing. If I wanted to race against anyone, it’d be him for sure.”

WATERS UNPLUGGED

This 21-year-old knows how to be diplomatic when he has to, but he isn't afraid of expressing his opinion, either. We planted the seeds of a few subjects and let the young bloke loose on the dictaphone. Here's what he had to say...

AUSSIE TEAMS HIRING OVERSEAS RIDERS...

"I reckon it's a perception thing. Most top Australian riders have been around since Juniors, and that's the way some team managers still see them. But with the 'internationals', managers see a national MX title winner or a MXGP front-runner. They pay big money for what they perceive to be 'proven talents', and yet us Aussies regularly beat them over here. That feels like a kick in the guts for me because many of these imports are semi-retired; they're here for a holiday and they don't put in half the effort Aussie guys do with training. Unlike us, they're not focused on building a career and they're never going to get quicker throughout the year. On the other hand, the Aussie riders are definitely going to get faster and faster because they're properly set up here and always pushing each other's boundaries. Also, I think these imports tend to fall into the pace of the guys they regularly race, which is what's happened with Billy Mackenzie and Brad Anderson this year.

"So why would you hire one of these guys over a Lawson Bopping, who's only going to get better? Sure, it's a cutthroat sport; if you win races, you get rides. After all, I was beaten to the title this year by Josh Coppins, who was hired from overseas. And he sure wasn't here for a holiday! It just seems to me that people have a tendency to think short-term when importing riders. But, hey, having these former GP winners racing in Australia is great; it gives Aussie riders an opportunity to chase them and learn from them. And then beat them! And that's why I was so disappointed when Ben Townley got injured earlier this year."

MAJOR INFLUENCES...

"Ricky Carmichael and Chad Reed have had a big impact on me, and Chad was my ultimate hero for years. On the local scene – because I was with KTM for many years – I really looked up to Jay and Ryan Marmont, and I had a dream to be on the Factory KTM like them. These days, I race the Marmonts and we catch up in the pits. That's what makes the sport so special."

WHAT PEOPLE DON'T KNOW ABOUT TODD WATERS...

"That my brain gets messed up with mirrors. When I ride, I can't see myself, so I've got to picture what I want to do in my head. Y'know, I'm telling myself to keep my elbows up and weight the outside peg, but my eyes are focused on the track ahead. So everything I've learned is from feel and visualising it. Then, when I'm in the gym – doing squats, for example – my trainer tells me to look in the mirror to make sure I'm centred and keeping good form. But I keep telling him that doesn't work for me because my brain has been conditioned to do things by feel. It tries to compensate for the fact the mirror image is opposite, and I get all uncoordinated. It's the weirdest thing."

THE RESURGENCE OF TWO-STROKES...

"I rode two-strokes as a Junior, but as soon as I turned 16, I've raced four-strokes. I have had a go on a mate's 250cc two-stroke, but I've never raced one. Those things sounded so sweet at the indoor supercross events, and it's good to see more guys racing them successfully in the MXD and MX2 classes these days. And, compared to the high-tech four-strokes, they make racing much more affordable for privateers. If I was racing the Under 19s now, I'd be on a 250cc two-stroke for sure. They're wickedly fast and definitely at a huge advantage out of the gate."

RACING OVERSEAS...

"It's unfortunate that Chad Reed, Michael Byrne and Brett Metcalfe are all injured and can't race the Motocross of Nations this year. But it has given the opportunity for the all-rookie Aussie team of me, Lawson Bopping and Luke Styke to gain experience in Belgium. The MXoN will actually be my first time racing overseas, so it's massive for me just to be part of it and to show what I'm capable of.

"That said, I'm in no hurry to move overseas. I don't have the backing of a really wealthy family, so I see everything as an investment in myself. If I go over to America and blow 50 grand, then that's not worth it for me. When I move overseas to race, I'm going there to stay; not yo-yo back and forth. That's why I plan to do some overseas races in the next two years before taking that massive step of moving to another country. If I put in the work during the next few years, I do feel that I can make it happen. I just want to do it smart. Riding the bike over there is the easy part. The hard part is setting up a new life for yourself. I moved out of home at 17 and was living out of my van at Ford Dale's place on the Sunshine Coast. So I think I'll adapt well when the time comes."

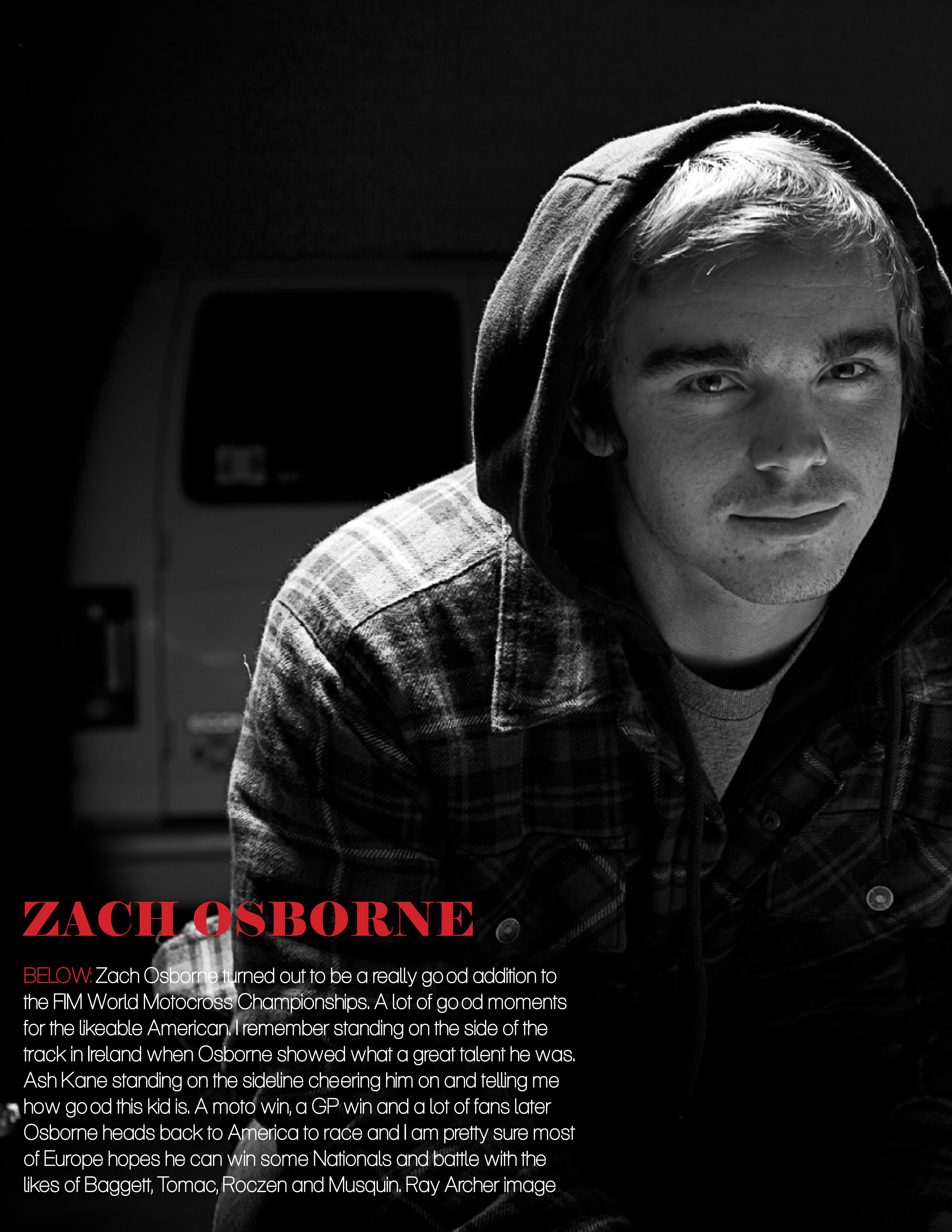
SEASON 2013...

"I know I can be in the hunt for the MX1 title, but I can't say what bike I'll be riding just yet. Because I've been injured for the past couple of years, contract negotiations in the past have been full of talk about how bad the economy is. This year, the economy's pretty much the same, but teams are pulling stuff from everywhere and offering me everything. I guess that reinforces the point that I'm a sought-after rider for the first time in my career."

TEAMS ARE NOW OFFERING ME EVERYTHING. I'M FINALLY A SOUGHT-AFTER RIDER.

MORE ONLINE...

Want to see more? Head to transmoto.com.au to check out an exclusive video with Todd Waters.



ZACH OSBORNE

BELOW: Zach Osborne turned out to be a really good addition to the FIM World Motocross Championships. A lot of good moments for the likeable American. I remember standing on the side of the track in Ireland when Osborne showed what a great talent he was. Ash Kane standing on the sideline cheering him on and telling me how good this kid is. A moto win, a GP win and a lot of fans later Osborne heads back to America to race and I am pretty sure most of Europe hopes he can win some Nationals and battle with the likes of Baggett, Tomac, Roczen and Musquin. Ray Archer image

GYTR
Mac To
MX ILLUSTRATED
FRAGILE
CAUTION!
DEWALT

DAVID PHILLIPARTS

BELOW: David Philippaerts is on the borderline, no doubt about it. After his 2008 FIM World MX1 Championship the brilliant Italian has little success on the GP scene. He has shown time and time again in MXoN battle that he has the speed, but for one reason or another he just isn't able to race with the likes of Cairoli, Desalle and Paulin on a more frequent basis. Of course injury has always ruined his career to some extent. Ray Archer image

HERLINGS FIRE BREATHER

BELOW: The Red Bull KTM Factory team have given their riders every possability to win FIM World Motocross Championships and this year was no different. Jeffrey Herlings 250cc KTM looks brilliant in this classic Ray Archer studio image. No sure there is one bike in the paddock that looks more professional than the orange bikes from Austria. Ray Archer image

PIRELLI
Twin Air
250 SX-F
ATHENA
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KEVIN STRIJBOS

BELOW: Kevin Strjbos is back stronger than ever and wouldn't it be great to see him back winning GPs and battling for the FIM World Motocross Championship. Strjbos has a couple of tough years and he has worked his way back into the Suzuki factory team. Here he poses for the Ray Archer camera just before going out to train. Ray Archer image

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GIUSEPPE LUONGO

ABOVE: For those who know Giuseppe Luongo and his passion for the sport it is easy to only look at the positives of the sport. Without the Youthstream president the sport of Motocross in Europe would look a lot different. Going to many of the National Championships in Europe and the lack of support from the industry for the teams due to the credit crisis Youthstream have build the FIM World Motocross Championships up well in tough times. Ray Archer image

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THE TOMAC EXPRESS

After clinching the 2012 AMA Supercross Western Lites title, this kid from a remote corner of Colorado is fast becoming one of the sport's brightest prospects – just as his famous father was in mountainbike circles.

SIMON MAKKER SIMON MAKKER, SIMON CUDBY

The Las Vegas pit paddock is a frantic, seething mass of humanity. Rabid fans struggle and push to catch a glimpse of their racing idols. Sponsors and VIPs are wined, dined and politely told to move out of the way of the bustling mechanics. Media lurk in the background, rattling off a barrage of shots. Riders sign autographs, converse in huddles with team bigwigs, and tell the umpteenth kid they can't have their goggles.

Amid all this mayhem, Eli Tomac clambers up the stairs inside the Geico Honda semi and sits heavily on the couch in the rider's area with a sigh. This is the riders' sanctuary; a place for the stars of the sport to escape the mad-house for a few minutes, catch their breath and reset the focus button.

"Man, it is crazy out there," he says with wide eyes, an incredulous smile and an unbelieving shake of his head. "It's not often the pits get as busy as it is out there right now. It's amazing we can even race with so much going on around us."

That wide-eyed wonderment quickly puts into perspective how young this kid from Cortez, Colorado, is. Even after two full seasons in the Pro ranks, Eli Tomac is still a fresh-faced teenager coming to terms with his newly acquired near-celebrity status. Claiming the 2012 AMA Supercross Western Lites title obviously played a huge role in this, but now he struggles to walk through the pits without being surrounded by a throng of frothing fans seeking an autograph or photo.

But the attention hasn't got to his head. Eli is adamant he's unchanged by the recent media hype and rapidly expanding fan-base, and is still the same humble country kid he's always been.

"I haven't changed. And if I ever let the attention get to my head, I'm sure my parents will pull me back into line," the 19-year-old smiles. "I'm just here to ride motorcycles the best I can and have fun doing it. That's all I've ever wanted to do."

While the vast majority of the sport's elite either grew up – or now reside – in the renowned moto hotspots of California and Florida, Eli was raised on a 303-hectare alfalfa and horse ranch in Colorado with his parents and half-brother Greg Oswald, who now serves in the US Air Force.

The blond-haired kid still lives in the remote location and wouldn't have it any other way. "Yeah, we're a big drive from anywhere, but I love it," he elaborates. "I think it's helped my moto career; I build and maintain my own tracks and I don't have to worry about overcrowded tracks, everyone watching you ride and trying to see what your deal is. No one sees me train and I don't have the distractions or have to worry about getting caught up in the moto culture. Living out here definitely has its advantages."

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> "As a kid, it's natural that you're gonna get pissed off at your parents. There have been a few instances when the line between trainer-athlete and father-son has been a little blurred."

BUILDING BLOCKS

Two wheels and dirt have always been a way of life in the Tomac household. Eli's father, John, is the 1991 World Cross-Country Mountainbike Champion and has more national titles to his name than he cares to remember. However, even though his old man was all about 26-inch wheels and pedals, Eli maintains there was never any pressure to follow in his footsteps.

"There wasn't any pressure and I don't really know why I took up moto. I've always loved two wheels and I guess it seemed a lot easier to twist a throttle and get up hills rather than pushing on pedals the whole time," he laughs. "Mum and Dad bought me a Yamaha PW50 for Christmas one year, and from then on I was hooked on motorcycles."

In the early mini-bike days, Eli wasn't a top rider by any stretch of the imagination, but when he stepped up to the 60s, things started to fall into place. After picking up a Loretta Lynn's title aboard his 60cc, he caught the attention of Suzuki and signed to ride an 85cc for them.

"Once I picked up the Suzuki mini-bike ride, I started to take things a lot more seriously," Eli explains. "That was the turning point when I decided I wanted to make a go of the sport. I became a mini pro when I was on 85cc Super-minis. It's crazy," he laughs.

From that point, Tomac's career snowballed. He picked up eight Loretta Lynn's titles on his 60, for Suzuki, then for the Factory Connection Honda team. The Honda outfit then helped him transition into the sport's professional ranks in 2010.

Despite his burgeoning trophy cabinet and obvious skill on a motorcycle, Eli is quick to attribute his success to the dedication and support of his family. But that support transcends what a family typically does; Eli's father, John, is also his personal trainer and mentor.

"Dad plays a major part in my life, for sure," Tomac explains. "He trains me and tells me when to hit the gym, when to go out on the mountainbike and when to do push-ups. I'll admit it does get a little weird at times – as a kid, it's natural that you're gonna get pissed off at your parents, and there have been a few instances when the line between trainer-athlete and father-son has been blurred. I've learnt to get over things pretty quick, move on and focus on my goals. It works out alright ... most of the time!" ➘

After clinching the SX title, Tomac carried plenty of momentum into the Outdoors. He sits third after five rounds.

Tomac won his first ever AMA MX race back at the 2010 season opener. But he took two years to replicate it.

“I’m the kind of guy who tries to ride as clean as possible, but if you want to ride aggressively with me, I’m going to come right back at you.”

OWNING THE OUTDOORS

Eli entered the professional ranks with as much subtlety as a streaker at a nuns’ convention. At his debut appearance on the AMA Motocross Championship at Hangtown in 2010, the high-rising grom didn’t just finish inside the top-10, he won the Overall against the likes of Christophe Pourcel, Trey Canard and Jake Weimer, shell-shocking the entire industry and nearly causing an Internet meltdown.

“I can tell you, it came as a total surprise to me, too,” Eli admits with almost an embarrassed smile. “When you hit Seniors, of course you want to make a good impression, and I would’ve been stoked to have finished in the top 10 in my debut race. I don’t know if it was beginner’s luck as much as I was running on pure adrenalin that day.”

Tomac, however, didn’t win another outdoor race for two years after that momentous day at Hangtown; something that weighed his mind down more and more as each race passed. “After that first win came so easy, I kinda expected to win races week-in and week-out,” he admits. “It probably gave me a false sense of what it’s really like at this level, and my results went up and down for two years. Both the 2010 and 2011 seasons started okay, got rough in the middle, then seemed to come right at the end. But I was sick to death of not winning outdoors and tired of staying awake at night mulling it over in my mind.

“This year I’m working on starting better, working hard during the middle and finishing the season off strong. I definitely think people are going to see a more aggressive Eli out there this year. Our bikes are a lot better, I feel better prepared and I’m starting to ride looser, push it harder and I’m gaining more aggression. If I can do all that, I think I’ll be a title contender this year.”

And so far, things are going to plan. After a respectable fifth Overall at the 2012 opening round at Hangtown, Eli broke his outdoors drought with an emphatic 1-1 performance at Freestone, TX, a week later; a track he describes as his “nemesis” due to his poor results there over the past two seasons. To give you an idea of his pace, Tomac’s lap times in the first moto were the fastest anyone posted the entire weekend ... and that includes the blistering laps laid down by James Stewart and Ryan Dungey as they battled for the lead in the 450cc class!

“For the last two seasons – especially 2010 – Freestone put a real bump in my campaign and forced me to play catch-up for the rest of the seasons,” Eli explains. “I finally screwed my head on straight there this year and had great flow around ➘

CAREER LANDMARKS

AUGUST 12, 2009
Wraps up amateur career with Schoolboy 2 and 250B Modified wins at Loretta Lynn’s, bringing up eight Loretta Lynn’s titles.

AUGUST 16, 2009
Wins the Junior FIM World MX Championship in Taupo, New Zealand.

MAY 23, 2010
Wins the Lites-class Overall on his debut appearance in the AMA Motocross Championship at Hangtown, CA.

JANUARY 22, 2011
Gains first West Coast Lites Supercross podium at Los Angeles, CA.

FEBRUARY 19, 2011
Wins first West Coast Lites Supercross main event at San Diego, CA.

MAY 7, 2011
Narrowly loses the 2011 West Coast Lites Supercross title to Broc Tickle at Las Vegas, NV.

FEBRUARY 11, 2012
Cracks his elbow in a crash at San Diego, just before a 10-week break in the series.

APRIL 21, 2012
Wins an epic battle with Pro Circuit Kawasaki’s Dean Wilson at Seattle, WA, finishing the race in third.

APRIL 28, 2012
Wraps up 2012 West Coast Lites Supercross title at Salt Lake City, UT.

MAY 26, 2012
Wins his first MX Lites-class Overall in two years with a 1-1 result at Freestone, TX.

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Eli's signed with Geico Honda for 2013, and his Outdoor wins have finally silenced the "one-hit wonder" critics.

the track. It feels like a huge weight has been lifted off my shoulders, and to win just before my home round at Colorado was an added bonus."

SX RETRIBUTION

Eli's momentum early in the outdoors season stems directly from an impressive 2012 supercross performance where he overcame an epic battle with Pro Circuit Kawasaki's Dean Wilson to win the Western Lites title. After a heart-breaking runner-up result to Broc Tickle at the season finale at Las Vegas in 2011, Eli came into the 2012 season hungrier and with significantly more fire in his belly. However, despite his good intentions, Eli's season got off to a shocker when he crashed, then suffered a mechanical DNF in the first heat of the first round. "The whole time, I was thinking, 'Man, are you serious? I'm going to the LCQ at the first round. There's a good chance I could start the series without making the main!'"

Tomac dug deep, won the LCQ, then podiumed in the main, before winning three rounds in a row at LA, Oakland then Anaheim 2. Just when it seemed the Tomac train was gathering an unstoppable head of steam, a big crash in the San Diego whoops saw him crack the radial head of his elbow and DNF. On top of that, Dean Wilson gained a maximum points advantage and took a slender two-point lead into the 10-week break as the series headed East.

"That crash was a good lesson that I don't have to try and win every race. I was sitting in third, Dean was winning and Cole [*Seely*] was second. I tried to find some extra time in the whoops and it bit me hard. Luckily I had a 10-week break to recover, so as bad as it was, it couldn't have happened at a better time," he grins.

When the West Coast championship recommenced at Seattle, Wilson and Tomac came out with all guns blazing, and their main event stoush has been dubbed the best battle of the season as they traded blows and plastic for the best part of 15 laps.

"I was surprised when he started riding so hard," Eli reveals. "He was diving in deep on me in corners, so I started diving in deep myself. He didn't let off, and I'm the kind of guy who tries to ride as clean as possible, but if you want to ride aggressively with me, I'm going to come right back at you. I passed him clean twice, but when he tried to punt me off the track, I thought, 'That's it!' and came back after him and he ended up hitting the dirt as a result. We haven't really talked about it, but it's not like we want to go out the back of the pits and kill each other. It's all good between us."

Tomac won in surprising circumstances at the next round at Salt Lake City when all his ducks lined up and the 'mathematical chance' of a title win – where Seely had to DNF and Wilson had to have a shocker – actually occurred. "It was crazy the way it turned out. I didn't ↘

BEN TOWNLEY's TAKE

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experiencing different cultures; you don't often find that with Yanks. It was a privilege to be able to repay the hospitality they'd shown us in Colorado. "The thing I like about Eli is that he's a real person. When we visited his ranch, we went hunting, dicked around with paintball guns, drove his diggers ... he's just a normal kid. As far as his riding goes, I've got to say I was more surprised by his two-year gap between wins than how he started his Senior career with a hiss and a roar. But he's starting to hit his stride now and there's not much that will hold him back. Eli will definitely have major longevity in the sport. He's only going to get better on a bigger bike with more competition. And the program and training John has for him should set him up for legendary status, much like John himself has in mountainbiking."

Tomac's come-from-behind race wins this season have been miraculous. At just 19, the kid has a huge future.

> "Dad plays a major part in my life, for sure. He trains me and tells me when to hit the gym, when to go out on the mountainbike and when to do push-ups."

even know I'd won the title when I crossed the finishline; it wasn't until someone came down and told me that I realised it! I was stoked for sure, but it wasn't the way I would've liked to have won. However, it was nice to come into Vegas not having to worry about the points chase."

SKY'S THE LIMIT

With Eli's career now starting to gather some serious momentum, it's anyone's guess as to how many races and titles this kid will win. At just 19 and already entering his third outdoor season, time and experience are both on his side.

"I don't really have it in my head to go out there and break records. Stewart, RC, McGrath and now Villopoto have already raised the bar so much and it'll be tough to go out there and eclipse their win record," Eli surmises humbly. "But you can never say never. I want to win as many races as I possibly can and continue to grow, both as a rider and a person. You can never stop learning and the more you learn, the more successful you're likely to be."

That's the attitude of a champion. And something tells us we're going to see and hear a lot more of Eli Tomac in the future. He's only just getting started.

JOHN TOMAC's TAKE

"I've helped Eli with his physical training since Day Dot. Though we do get some on-the-bike help from [*former Arenacross champion*] Buddy Antunez, and gym advice from [*motocross legend*] Ryan Hughes when we're in California. Blending others into Eli's program gives him the chance to gain different views and opinions, and makes sure I'm not always in his face – as there can be a father-son overload at times. I let him do his own work in the gym, but will go on most bike rides with him. It can be a little funky working so closely with someone, but it can also be a huge advantage as I can monitor and adjust his program accordingly. I think the best training for motocross falls between the endurance needed for cross-country MTB and the intensity for downhill MTB racing. The main difference is that, on a mountainbike, you're the engine. In motocross, it's more skill-oriented, although you do have to rely on your body as a secondary motor. Eli's a very consistent, technical rider who doesn't make many mistakes. In the past, he's struggled with endurance, but that comes with maturity. I like him to strive and work for things, because when it comes too easy early in their career, it can sour the passion for the sport. Sure, he's had success, but he's had to fight hard for it and we're very proud of him. And right now, Eli has very few chinks in his racing armour."

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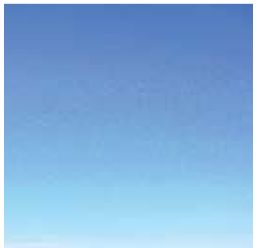

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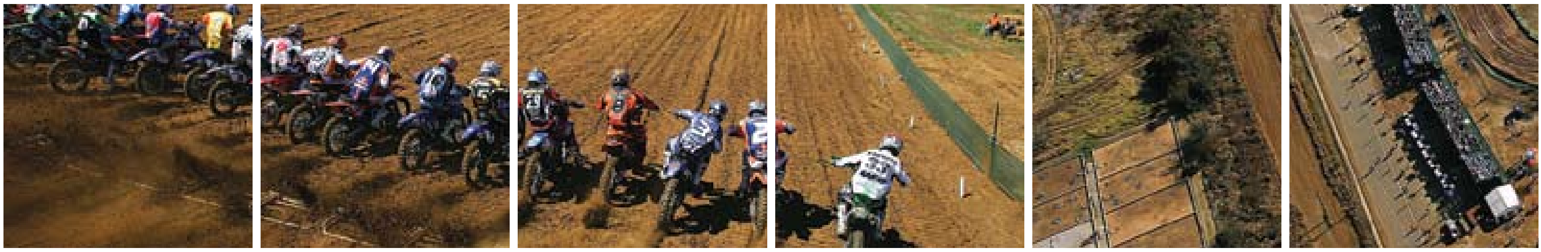

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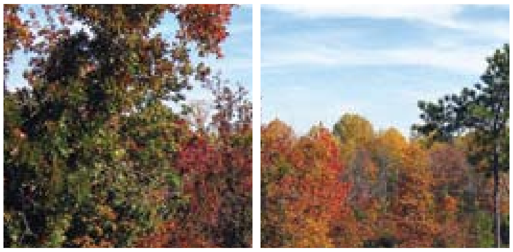

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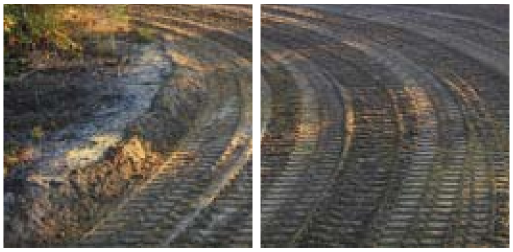

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